HIGH-UP ADS

FREE CHECKLIST

# THE WEBSITE THAT SHOWS UP ON GOOGLE AND BRINGS IN ORDERS AND CALLS

67 checks that show you where your website loses customers, and what to fix first



**14** CHAPTERS

**67** CHECKBOXES

**7** BLOCKS TO COPY

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# WHAT YOU'LL LEARN AND WHAT TO DO AFTER READING

"Everything's fine."

That's what the person who built your website told you. And you still have a feeling the site is costing you customers.

So who's right? The data.

This checklist won't turn you into a web developer. It gives you screenshots and numbers, so you can talk to your developer as an equal and keep them on your side.

A slow website, or one that's hard to use on a phone, costs you twice. On Google, if a competitor has a page that's just as good and faster, Google may rank it above yours (Google says speed is one of many signals, and relevance comes first). On your site, people leave before they call or order, even when you paid for the ad that brought them in. The checklist covers both.

## By the end, you'll know

- Whether Google can see the pages that make you money, and how they look in search results.
- Whether your site is fast enough on a phone, based on what Google measured on your real visitors, not on your gut.
- Where people who were ready to buy give up: at the price, at the form, at checkout or on the page your ads send them to.
- Whether you're tracking orders and leads correctly, so you know which ad makes money and which one only spends it.
- What each fix is worth to your business, with a short calculation on your own numbers.

## How long it takes, honestly

There are 67 checks. About two thirds of them (45 of 67) need only your phone, a browser and your eyes, no account. For example, you turn off Wi-Fi, open the page and count to three while you wait for the top photo. The rest need access to Search Console, Google Analytics or your Google Business Profile, or a free testing tool, and two of them you do together with your developer.

If you've used these tools before, the whole checklist takes about 3.5 to 4 hours. If you're seeing them for the first time, plan on a day. That's an estimate, not a stopwatch. Getting access you don't have yet can take a few days.

Don't do it in one sitting. Take it in pieces, a section or two a day.

## The steps, in order

1. Pick three pages and write them in the table under "How to use this checklist" (5 minutes).
2. Go through the checks in pieces and check off what passes. Five-minute fixes that cost nothing (a compressed photo, a rewritten title, a field removed from a form) just get a quick note in the margin, and you keep going.
3. Add up your points in "Your score" (5 minutes).
4. Do the five-minute fixes you marked, right away. They stay out of the plan.
5. Decide the order of the rest with "The order to fix things in."
6. For the fixes that cost money or time, run the math in "What a fix is worth" (about 15 minutes per fix).
7. Put them in "Your action plan," each with a person and a deadline (15 minutes).
8. Fix things on that plan over four weeks, then do the 30-minute routine every month.

## Tools and access you need

A laptop, your phone and access to four places: Google Search Console (Google's free tool that shows you how it sees your site), Google Analytics (where you see how many people visit and what they do there), your Google Business Profile (your business listing on Google Maps and Search) and your website's admin panel. Every tool in this checklist is free.

If you're missing any access, get it before you start. You need it before you can check anything. Ask whoever built your site for admin access on your business email address. The accounts need to stay with your business when you change developers or agencies.

## Three problems before all the others

Leave the five-minute fixes aside; you'll do them in step 4. Of the fixes that cost money or time, these three come first:

- the page that sells doesn't show up on Google;
- your site is blocking Google (robots.txt stops it from reading your pages, or noindex tells it not to show them; section 3 explains both);
- orders or leads don't reach Google Analytics.

While any one of them is there, you can't see clearly what the other fixes do, on Google or in your reports.

One exception: if your site is blocking Google because of a single checkbox in WordPress, uncheck it the moment you find it. Section 3 shows you where it is.

# HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

The same eight rules apply from the first check to the last.

1. Pick three pages and write their addresses in the table below.
2. Check a box only if it passes on all three pages, except for checks that tell you which page to use. Each check is worth one point.
3. Some checks cover the whole site (Search Console, robots.txt, your Google profile, tracking). You do those once.
4. Do the section 12 checks only on the page people land on from your ads.
5. If a check doesn't apply to your business, cross it out and take its point off the total. For example, online ordering at an auto repair shop; all of section 12 if you don't run ads (5 points); section 6 and the local business check in section 7 if you sell online and customers never come to you (7 points).
6. If you can't check something (no access, or you're not sure what you're looking at), leave it unchecked. Put it in the plan with "check with the developer." A check passes when it passes the test, not when someone says it's fixed.
7. Take a screenshot of every speed test and Search Console report. Three months from now, you compare against those, not against what you remember.
8. At the end, put your points in the score table.

Button and menu names are in quotes, exactly as they appear on screen. Google, Shopify, WordPress and Meta move their menus around from time to time. If you can't find a button, search the platform's help center, using the links under "Sources."

| PAGE | ADDRESS (URL) | WHY I PICKED IT |
|---|---|---|
| Home page | | |
| The page that sells: the one that brings in the most money (product, category, service) | | |
| The ad page: the one your ads send people to | | |

If you don't run ads, your third page is the most visited service or category page after the one that sells.

Not sure which page brings in the most money? In a store, look at your sales by product report. For services, pick the page for the service that brings in the most jobs.

# 01 SPEED AND CORE WEB VITALS

Someone opens your site in a parking lot, on cell data. Before the top photo shows up, they're back on Google.

Your developer says it loads fast for them. It probably does. But Google doesn't look at your developer's computer. It looks at real visits from real people.

It measures them with three numbers, together called Core Web Vitals.

- LCP: how long it takes for the biggest thing on the page to show up, usually the main photo or the headline.
- INP: how fast the page reacts when you tap something.
- CLS: how much the page jumps around while it loads.

| METRIC | WHAT IT MEASURES | GOOD | NEEDS IMPROVEMENT | POOR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| LCP | how long until the biggest thing on the page shows up | up to 2.5 s | 2.5 to 4 s | over 4 s |
| INP | how fast the page reacts to a tap | up to 200 ms | 200 to 500 ms | over 500 ms |
| CLS | how much the page jumps while loading | up to 0.1 | 0.1 to 0.25 | over 0.25 |

Google scores mobile and desktop separately. A page passes when at least three visits out of four land in the "Good" column.

So you don't have to take anyone's word for it. You look at the numbers.

- [ ] **Real-user data passes on mobile.** Test: go to pagespeed.web.dev, paste the address and choose "Mobile." Read the box at the top, the one with data from real visitors. It passes if LCP, INP and CLS are all green. If it says there isn't enough data, check the Core Web Vitals report in Search Console. A small site with few visits may not have data there either. Then go by the lab test below: it passes if LCP is under 2.5 s and CLS is under 0.1.
- [ ] **The lab test doesn't find huge images.** Test: in the same report, further down, read the "Improve image delivery" insight. It passes if it doesn't list any image that's much bigger than the space it fills. If it does, you've found the cheapest fix in this whole checklist.
- [ ] **The page shows up fast on cell data.** Test: turn off Wi-Fi on your phone and open the site. It passes if the headline and the main photo show up before you can count to three.

- [ ] **The page doesn't jump under your finger.** Test: load the page a few times and try to tap the main button quickly. It passes if the button doesn't move when a cookie banner, a promo or a late-loading photo appears.

## Fixes for each number that fails

The 0 to 100 score in PageSpeed is a lab test: one simulated phone, one page load. Google judges your site by the box with real-user data, so choose your fixes by that box and by the causes below, which Google describes on web.dev.

**If LCP fails.** Usually the big photo at the top is heavy, loads late or gets pulled in by JavaScript. Sometimes the server is slow to respond.

- What you do: compress the main photo, following the steps below. Take any big rotating photos (sliders) off the home page.
- What you ask your developer: no lazy loading on the main photo, give it `fetchpriority="high"`, and put it right in the page's HTML.

**If INP fails.** Usually too much code runs when the page loads and on every tap, and that code comes from plugins, chat widgets and old tracking codes.

- What you do: uninstall plugins and apps you no longer use. Remove tracking codes for tools you don't have an account with anymore.
- What you ask your developer: break up long JavaScript tasks and delay code that isn't needed at load.

**If CLS fails.** Usually images have no set size, banners and pop-ups appear on top of content and push it down, and fonts swap after the page loads.

- What you do: pick a cookie banner that sits at the bottom, over the page, instead of one that pushes the content down.
- What you ask your developer: add `width` and `height` to every image and reserve space for banners, ads and fonts.

## How to make the big top photo lighter

1. Start from the original photo: from your phone, from the photographer or from your site's admin panel. Don't save it off the page. That's the version the platform shows, often already shrunk or converted, and if you compress it again it loses quality.
2. Open squoosh.app, a free tool, and drag the photo in. The photo never leaves your computer.
3. Turn on "Resize" and set the width to twice the width the photo shows at on your site, so it looks sharp on high-resolution phone screens. Ask your developer once what that displayed width is. In PageSpeed, the "Improve image delivery" insight shows you each heavy image and how much smaller it could be.
4. Choose WebP or AVIF, the formats Google recommends. Lower "Quality" until you start to see a difference in the side-by-side preview, then nudge it back up a notch.

5. Upload the new photo in place of the old one and run PageSpeed again.

### Message to your developer

COPY THIS

Hi {name}, I tested {page address} on pagespeed.web.dev, on mobile. The real-user data shows LCP {x} s, INP {y} ms and CLS {z}. Google's "good" thresholds are 2.5 s, 200 ms and 0.1.

Could you look at: {the number that fails, and what's listed for it under "What you ask your developer"}.

When you're done, please run the test again and send me the screenshot. The real-user data takes a few weeks to update, so until then we'll go by the lab test.

If the page doesn't have real-user data yet, put the lab numbers for LCP and CLS in the message and leave out INP, which the lab test doesn't measure.

The real-user data in PageSpeed covers the last 28 days, so a fix shows up fully in that box only after about four weeks.

## 02 MOBILE

A customer wants to call you straight from your site. They tap the number. Nothing happens.

Nobody types a phone number in by hand anymore. They call someone else.

On a computer, your site can look perfect. But Google reads your site, and ranks it, based on the mobile version.

Put simply, what's missing on the phone doesn't exist for Google either.

So pick up your phone and check for yourself. Whatever doesn't work, you can point to it for your developer, exactly.

- [ ] **Same content on mobile and desktop.** Test: open the same page on your laptop and on your phone and compare the text and photos. It passes if nothing important disappears on the phone. If you want a shorter page on mobile, don't delete text. Tuck it into tabs or sections that open with a tap.
- [ ] **You can read the text without zooming.** Test: hold your phone at a normal distance and read a paragraph. It passes if you don't pinch to zoom and don't scroll sideways.

- [ ] **Buttons are easy to hit on the first try.** Test: tap the menu, the buttons and the footer links with your thumb. It passes if exactly what you meant to open opens, every time. The WCAG 2.2 accessibility standard calls for buttons and icons of at least 24 by 24 pixels, with a few exceptions.
- [ ] **Phone and text links open with one tap.** Test: tap your phone number and your "Text us" button, if you have one. It passes if the call or the message opens right away, without copying the number by hand.
- [ ] **A pop-up doesn't hide what you sell.** Test: open the site on your phone in a private window. It passes if you see what you sell before you see a newsletter sign-up form or a discount offer.

**How to fix phone and text links.** A number becomes tappable when its link starts with `tel:`, followed by the number with the country code. For example, `tel:+16145550142`. A "Text us" button works the same way with `sms:`, for example `sms:+16145550142`. The numbers in these examples are made up, so use your own.

## 03 INDEXING: SEARCH CONSOLE, SITEMAP, ROBOTS.TXT

You search Google for your service and your city. You find your competitors, the directories, even your Facebook page. The one thing you don't find is your own website.

The page exists, you can open it anytime. What matters to Google is something else: whether it's in the index.

The index is the list of pages Google can show in search results. A page that isn't in the index doesn't get seen on Google, however well it's written.

You need three terms for this section.

- The sitemap is the list of your site's pages that you hand to Google.
- robots.txt is the file that tells Google which pages not to read.
- noindex is a tag in a page's code that tells Google not to show it in search results.

With those in mind, the checks below show you in black and white whether your page is there or not.

- [ ] **Your site is in Search Console.** Test: go to search.google.com/search-console. It passes if your whole domain is added to your account and Google's warnings come to your email. If it isn't, add it as a "Domain" property and give the verification record from Google to whoever manages your domain's DNS (usually where you bought the domain, sometimes your web host or developer).

- [ ] **The pages that sell are indexed.** Test: in Search Console, open "Indexing," then the "Pages" report. It passes if the pages that sell are indexed: the home page, the categories or services and the main products. The "not indexed" list should hold only pages you don't want on Google anyway, like the cart, customer accounts or filtered results.
- [ ] **The page that sells is on Google.** Test: paste its address into the search bar at the top of Search Console ("URL inspection"). It passes if it says "URL is on Google." If you changed the page recently, click "Test live URL," then "Request indexing." Google sets a daily limit on these requests, so for lots of pages you submit the sitemap instead.
- [ ] **The sitemap is submitted and clean.** Test: open example.com/sitemap.xml, then the "Sitemaps" report in Search Console. It passes if the sitemap is submitted and reads without errors. It should list only the full addresses of good pages, with https://, no cart and no redirected pages. One sitemap file holds up to 50,000 addresses or 50 MB.
- [ ] **robots.txt doesn't block what you sell.** Test: open example.com/robots.txt. It passes if no "Disallow" line covers the pages that sell, and the file has a "Sitemap:" line with your sitemap's address. The worst case is a line that reads exactly "Disallow: /", with nothing after the slash, because that one closes off the whole site. Keep in mind that robots.txt doesn't take a page off Google. For that, you use noindex.
- [ ] **No important page has noindex.** Test: URL inspection in Search Console tells you whether indexing is allowed. It passes if it's allowed on all three pages. Developers often forget the tag on the site after launch.
- [ ] **Your site has one address.** Test: type your address into the browser four ways: http://example.com, http://www.example.com, https://example.com and https://www.example.com. It passes if all four end up, on their own, at the same address.

## Messages in the indexing report, and what to do about them

The "Pages" report in Search Console tells you why Google left each page out.

Three messages you can handle yourself, at least in part.

- "Excluded by 'noindex' tag" (Google's help page calls it "URL marked 'noindex'"): the page has the noindex tag. If the page sells, the tag has to go. In WordPress, look first at "Settings," then "Reading." The checkbox "Discourage search engines from indexing this site" puts noindex on the entire site, and you can uncheck it yourself. If the tag is in the page's code, your developer takes it out.
- "Not found (404)": the page doesn't exist anymore. If there's a page that replaces it, point a permanent redirect, called a 301, to that page. You can set it up yourself in your site's admin if your platform has a page for redirects (Shopify and many WordPress plugins do). Otherwise, your developer sets it up. If nothing replaces it, leave it. A 404 is normal for a deleted page.
- "Crawled - currently not indexed": Google read the page but hasn't added it to the index yet. Google says this is a common message and doesn't index every page on the web. If the page sells, fill it out with a price, your own photos and answers to real questions, then link to it from your menu or from pages people visit.

For any other message, for example "Soft 404," "Duplicate, Google chose different canonical than user," "Blocked by robots.txt" or "Server error (5xx)," take a screenshot and send it to your developer. Server errors go to your web host. That way you talk about what Google shows, not about opinions. Some messages don't need anything, like "Page with redirect" for a redirect you set up on purpose.

### Removing a page the right way

- You have a product or service that replaces it: put a 301 redirect to the new one.
- Nothing replaces it, but you have a category with similar products: redirect it to the category only if people will find what they were looking for there. Otherwise leave the 404, and put a search box and links to your main categories on the error page.
- The product is coming back in stock: don't delete the page. Say on it when it'll be back and link to similar products.
- You're moving the whole site to a new domain or a new platform: that's your developer's job. They point a 301 from each old address to its new match, not everything to the home page. Google recommends keeping redirects as long as possible, generally at least a year. Your part: before the move, export the list of old addresses from Search Console, from the "Pages" tab of the performance report.

### A basic robots.txt you can copy

COPY THIS

```
User-agent: *
Disallow: /cart
Disallow: /account
Sitemap: https://example.com/sitemap.xml
```

`/cart` and `/account` are examples, so swap in the real paths for the cart and the customer account on your site. On Shopify and many other store platforms the file is generated for you, so you only check that it doesn't close off the whole site.

## 04 YOUR TITLES AND DESCRIPTIONS ON GOOGLE

Say you run an auto repair shop in Columbus, Ohio. In the search results, yours says "Home." The competitor right below you says what they do and in what city.

Which one would you click?

The page title is the first line people read on Google. Under it sits the description, a short summary of the page.

Google doesn't set a length limit for titles, but it cuts them off to fit the screen. So put the important words first.

The good news is you can check this yourself. You search and you read.

- [ ] **Every page has its own title.** Test: search Google for site:example.com and read the titles. The list is approximate, but it's good enough for this. It passes if you don't see any repeated title and no "Home," "Product" or "Page 1."
- [ ] **The title says what's on the page and where.** It passes if the title says what the page is about and, for local services, the city. A good example: "Brake repair in Columbus, Ohio, with online booking | Shop Name." A title with the same word three times doesn't help you. Put your business name in once, at the start or at the end.
- [ ] **The description is written for that page.** Google says identical or similar descriptions on every page aren't helpful, and that it often builds the snippet from the page's own text. It passes if your important pages have different descriptions, each with one concrete detail: your starting price, your shipping time or the area you serve. Test: open the SEO section for each page in your admin (on Shopify, "Search engine listing") and compare the descriptions.
- [ ] **Page addresses say what's on the page.** A good example: /services/brake-repair, not /p?id=4821. If you change the address of a page that already gets visits, put a 301 redirect from the old address. Otherwise you lose what the page has built up on Google.

## Title formulas, by type of page

These examples are for made-up businesses. Use them as a model and fill in your own details.

| PAGE | FORMULA | EXAMPLE |
|---|---|---|
| Product | the product + the detail people decide on + the store | 10-inch cast iron skillet, pre-seasoned \| Store Name |
| Category | what you'll find + what sets the offer apart | Induction-ready cookware that ships in 1 business day \| Store Name |
| Local service | the service + the city + what sets you apart | Brake repair in Columbus, Ohio, with online booking \| Shop Name |
| Lodging | the place + what kind of place + the area | 8-room bed-and-breakfast in Stowe, Vermont, breakfast included \| Inn Name |
| Selling to businesses | what you deliver + to whom | Packaging lines for commercial bakeries \| Company Name |
| Commercial construction | what you build + the area + what you cover | Warehouse construction in North Texas, from design to final inspection \| Company Name |
| Home page | the name + what you do + where | Shop Name: auto repair in Columbus, Ohio, brakes, tires, and oil changes |

**The description, with one formula:** what's on the page, one concrete detail and what to do next. An example for an auto repair shop in Columbus: "Service for any make, with the price shown before you book. Book online in two minutes or give us a call." Google reads the description as a summary for people, not as a list of keywords. It doesn't use the "meta keywords" tag at all.

### Changing them on Shopify, WordPress and other platforms

- For the home page on Shopify, in your admin, go to "Online Store," then "Preferences," to the "Social sharing image and SEO" section. Click "Save" when you're done.
- For any other page on Shopify, go to "Online Store," then "Pages," open the page, and under "Search engine listing preview" click "Edit website SEO." Write the title in "Page title" and the description in "Description." Products and collections have the same section on their edit pages.
- In WordPress, without an SEO plugin, your Google title is the title of the post or page. With an SEO plugin, there's a separate box under the page content for the Google title and description.
- On other store platforms, look for an SEO section on the product edit page. If there isn't one, ask the platform or your developer to turn it on.

Google picks up new titles the next time it visits the page, which can be a few days or a few weeks. For the home page you can request indexing in Search Console, but only once, because Google says asking again for the same address doesn't speed anything up.

## 05 HEADINGS ON THE PAGE (H1, H2, H3)

On the phone, customers ask you what it costs, how long it takes and when they can come in. Your page answers with the history of your company.

The text on your page has its own headings, in levels.

- H1 is the main heading.
- H2s are section headings.
- H3s are subheadings inside a section.

You see them as bigger text. Google reads them from the code.

So this is where you put two things you already know side by side: what people ask you, and what your headings say.

- [ ] **One clear main heading.** Test: enter the address at wave.webaim.org and open the "Structure" tab. It passes if the page has a single H1 that says what the page is about.

- [ ] **Section headings say something.** It passes if your headings read like "What a brake job costs" and "What's included," not "About us" on every page. For Google, the order of H2s and H3s doesn't matter. People who use a screen reader find their way by it, though.
- [ ] **Same headings on mobile.** It passes if you see the same headings on your phone as on your laptop. Google recommends using the same headings on both.

**A heading outline for a service page:**

- H1: the service and the city, for example "Brake repair in Columbus, Ohio";
- H2: "What it costs";
- H2: "What's included and what isn't";
- H2: "How long it takes";
- H2: "How to book";
- H2: "Questions customers ask us."

The order follows the questions you get on the phone, not what you want to say first.

## 06 LOCAL SEO: YOUR GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

Someone finds you on Google Maps. They see your old hours, call on a Saturday and nobody picks up. They never even made it to your website.

Your Business Profile is your business's listing on Google Maps and in Google Search. From there, people can call you directly without ever visiting your site.

So if your customers are local, your profile deserves the same care as your website.

And you can check it yourself. Open it the way a customer would and read what it says.

- [ ] **The profile is yours and verified by Google.** Test: go to business.google.com. It passes if you manage it yourself, from a business account and not a former employee's, and the profile isn't asking you to verify it.
- [ ] **The name is your business's real name.** It passes if you see the name that's on your sign, your website and your business paperwork, and nothing else. A name like "[Name] Auto Repair Cheap Brakes Oil Change Columbus" breaks Google's rules, which don't allow extra information in the business name.
- [ ] **The category says what your business is.** It passes if the primary category says what your business *is*, and you haven't added categories for everything else you do on the side. That's what Google asks for: the fewest categories it takes to describe your core business.

- [ ] **The address is right.** If customers come to you, it passes when the address is exact. If you go to them, it passes when the address is hidden and you've set the area you serve. A virtual office isn't eligible unless your own staff works there during your hours.
- [ ] **Your name, address, phone and hours match everywhere.** It passes if they're filled in and written the same way on your profile, your website, Facebook, Yelp and any other directory you're listed in. Your website address has to be on the profile too.
- [ ] **You ask every customer for a review.** It passes if you ask every customer, including the one who had a problem, and give nothing in return. Google bans discounts, free products or anything else in exchange for reviews. It also bans asking only the customers you expect to leave five stars. Reply to every review, the bad ones included.

Google says it can change, remove or suspend a profile that breaks its rules. A suspended profile doesn't bring in a single call.

The FTC has its own rule on this. Since October 21, 2024, its Consumer Reviews and Testimonials Rule bans fake reviews, paying for reviews that have to say something positive (or negative), reviews from company insiders that don't clearly disclose the connection, and suppressing negative reviews with threats or intimidation. Courts can impose civil penalties for knowing violations. The FTC's guide for marketers adds: "Don't ask for reviews only from customers you think will leave positive ones." Google's ban on incentives is stricter than the FTC's, so on Google, the answer is simple: no incentives at all.

## Your review link

1. On a computer, go to business.google.com. The QR code can only be made from a computer browser.
2. Choose "Read Reviews," then "Get more reviews."
3. Click "Copy" to copy the link. To save the QR code, right-click it and choose "Save image as."
4. Put the link in your thank-you message. Put the QR code at the register, on the receipt or on the invoice.

## The message to ask for a review

Send it to every customer, by text or email, on the day they got their order or you finished the job. In the brackets, use whatever fits your business: "ordering from us," "coming in" or "working with us."

COPY THIS

Hi {first name}, thanks for {ordering from us}. If you have a minute, a Google review would help us a lot, good or bad: {link}. We read every one and we reply to all of them.

## Replies to reviews

**To a good review:**

COPY THIS

Thanks, {first name}. We're glad {the detail they wrote about}. See you {at your next oil change}.

**To a bad review,** reply the same day, briefly, with what happened and your name. Don't argue in public, because every customer who comes after will read it. At a medical or dental practice, say nothing about the patient's care in your reply, even if the patient wrote about it first. Instead of naming the problem, write "your experience." In 2019 a Dallas dental practice paid $10,000 to settle a federal HIPAA case after it disclosed patient information in replies to online reviews. Say you're sorry about what happened and ask them to call you.

COPY THIS

Hi {first name}, I'm sorry about {the problem, stated exactly; at a medical or dental practice, "your experience"}. I looked into it and {what happened or what we changed}. I'd like to make this right, so please call me directly at {phone}. {Your name}, {your role}

## How to see what your profile brings in

1. Go to business.google.com, signed in with the account that manages your profile.
2. Open your profile and click "Performance."
3. Pick the time period and click "Apply."

You'll see, among other things, how many calls you got, how many people asked for directions and how many clicked through to your site. Calls are actually taps on the call button in your profile. Write them down every month in the table under "The 30-minute monthly routine," because they tell you better than your spot on Google Maps whether your profile brings in customers.

# 07 STRUCTURED DATA, THE BARE MINIMUM

Your Google profile says you close at 6 pm. Your website says 5. Google has to guess.

Structured data is a block of code that tells Google who you are, where you are and what you sell, in a format it reads reliably. Google recommends the JSON-LD format.

This one's a team effort. You fill in the block, because you know your hours, your address and what you sell. Your developer puts it on the site.

- [ ] **The test shows no critical errors.** Test: search.google.com/test/rich-results, with your home page and with a product or service page. It passes if there are zero critical errors.
- [ ] **Your local business is described.** Test: in the same test, see whether a local business block shows up. It passes if the local business block (LocalBusiness) has your name and address, the only two required fields. Add your phone, your hours and your website address as well.
- [ ] **You mark up only what's on the page.** Test: in the test from the first check in this section, see what Google read from the block and compare it with what the page says. It passes if the block describes only what a visitor can see on the page. That's what Google asks for. Star ratings from reviews of your own business don't show up on Google, even if you bring them onto your site with a Google or Facebook reviews widget. Don't spend time on them.

## A local business block you can copy

Fill it in with your details, exactly as they appear on your website and your Google profile, then give it to your developer to add to the code of your home page and your contact page. For "@type," Google recommends the most specific type for your business from the list on schema.org: `AutoRepair` for a repair shop, `Restaurant`, `Dentist`, `Store` and so on. The business below is made up.

COPY THIS

```
{
  "@context": "https://schema.org",
  "@type": "AutoRepair",
  "name": "Example Auto Repair",
  "address": {
    "@type": "PostalAddress",
    "streetAddress": "123 Example St",
    "addressLocality": "Columbus",
    "addressRegion": "OH",
    "postalCode": "43215",
    "addressCountry": "US"
  },
  "url": "https://example.com",
  "telephone": "+16145550142",
  "openingHoursSpecification": [
    {
      "@type": "OpeningHoursSpecification",
      "dayOfWeek": ["Monday", "Tuesday", "Wednesday", "Thursday", "Friday"],
      "opens": "08:00",
      "closes": "18:00"
    },
    {
      "@type": "OpeningHoursSpecification",
      "dayOfWeek": "Saturday",
      "opens": "09:00",
      "closes": "13:00"
    }
  ]
}
```

The hours use 24-hour time (18:00 is 6 pm), because that's the format the markup expects. Once the block is in place, run your home page through the test above and fix anything that shows up in red.

# 08 WHAT'S ON EACH PAGE

That's the fifth person this week who's called to ask what's included in a brake job. And for the fifth time, you explain what they could have read on your site.

Only you know the questions people ask on the phone. Nobody else can give you that data.

Even the customer's exact words matter. If you use different words than they do, your page answers a question nobody types into Google.

So write down what people ask you and hold it up against what your page says.

- [ ] **Every service or category has its own page.** It passes if every main service or category has a separate page, not one paragraph covering everything. At a repair shop, for example: oil changes, brakes and tires.
- [ ] **The page answers the questions you get on the phone.** Test: write down five questions you got this week and look for the answers on the page. It passes if the page answers all five. They're usually about price, how long it takes, where you are and what the job includes.
- [ ] **The photos are yours.** It passes if the products and the work are photographed by you.
- [ ] **You don't have two pages with the same content.** Test: in Search Console, in the "Pages" report, look for messages that start with "Duplicate." It passes if every page has its own text. If two are the same, keep one. Redirect the other to it or mark it with a canonical tag, so Google knows which one to show.

### The question sheet, to fill in for one week

Keep the sheet by the phone and write down every question you get, texts and emails included. At the end of the week, every question that came up at least twice gets an answer on the right page.

| THE QUESTION, IN THE CUSTOMER'S WORDS | HOW MANY TIMES | WHICH PAGE ANSWERS IT | ANSWER ADDED |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | [ ] |
| | | | [ ] |
| | | | [ ] |
| | | | [ ] |
| | | | [ ] |

Use the customer's words. If people ask about an "oil change" and your page says "preventive maintenance service," you're answering a question nobody asks.

## 09 INTERNAL LINKS

Say you wrote a good article on how to pick winter tires. Someone read it all the way through.

Now what?

There's no way for them to get to booking a tire install. You convinced them, and then you left them there.

Internal links are links on your site that go to other pages on your site.

Checking them is simple. Read the page like a customer and see whether there's something to tap at the end.

- [ ] **The page that sells is one click from the home page.** It passes if you can get to it from the menu or from a button on the home page.
- [ ] **The link text says where it goes.** A good example: "see our brake repair prices," not "click here." Google uses that text to understand the page it points to, the same way a person does.
- [ ] **You have no broken links.** Test: enter your site's address at validator.w3.org/checklink and check "Check linked documents recursively," so it goes through the whole site. It passes if no link on your site points to a deleted page.
- [ ] **Your articles link to what you sell.** It passes if every article links to the page where you sell what it describes. For example, the article on picking winter tires links to your tire install page.

## 10 TRUST: PRICE, CONTACT, BUSINESS DETAILS, REVIEWS

Your site says "Request a quote." Your competitor's site shows a starting price. The customer calls your competitor.

Someone who doesn't know you is looking for proof that you exist and won't rip them off. And they won't look for long, because your competitors' sites are open in the other tabs.

You don't need any tools here. Look at your site through a stranger's eyes and check off what you find.

- [ ] **The price is visible.** It passes if you see an exact price, or a "from" price, on every product or service page. In a store, the shipping terms show on the product page: the cost, the delivery time and the order amount for free shipping, if you offer it.
- [ ] **Contact details are complete.** It passes if you see a phone number you can tap, an email address, the hours you answer and, if you take texts, a way to text you.
- [ ] **Your business details are on the site.** It passes if you see your business name (and your DBA, if you do business under another name), your street address or the area you serve, and, if your trade is licensed, your license number, in the footer or on the contact page. If you collect any personal information, like an email address in a form, there's also a link to your privacy policy.
- [ ] **The reviews are real.** It passes if you see reviews with the customer's name, posted with their permission, or a link to your Google profile. No reviews written by you, your staff or your friends.

- [ ] **Returns and warranty are one click away.** It passes if you find a page written in plain English, with deadlines and a person to talk to.
- [ ] **You can see who works there.** It passes if you see real photos of your team and your place, not stock photos of people smiling in an office.

A few facts behind these checks. California requires any commercial website that collects personal information from California residents to post its privacy policy conspicuously (Business and Professions Code section 22575), and a site in Ohio still gets visitors from California. Some states require licensed trades to show their license number in ads: California's contractors board, for one, says that includes "any website or post that solicits business on the Internet." And if you sell products that cost more than $15 and come with a written warranty, the FTC requires the warranty terms to be available to buyers before they buy.

**If you can't post a fixed price,** as with remodeling or projects for other businesses, say what a typical job starts at. Then say what the price depends on: the square footage, the materials, the timeline. Someone who sees "tile installed from $9 per square foot, you supply the tile" knows whether it fits their budget. Someone who sees "Request a quote" goes looking for someone who'll name a number. The figure in this example is made up.

## 11 FORMS AND CHECKOUT

A customer has a skillet in her cart. She gets to checkout, the site asks her to create an account with a password, and she closes the tab.

It's not just you. Baymard Institute, a research firm that studies online stores, has collected 50 studies on shopping carts, published from 2006 to 2025. On average, 70.22% of carts are abandoned (Baymard's figures, last updated October 2026).

Baymard also asked US online shoppers why they had abandoned a cart.

| THE REASON | SHARE WHO GAVE IT |
|---|---|
| extra costs too high (shipping, tax, fees) | 40% |
| delivery was too slow | 20% |
| didn't trust the site with their card information | 19% |
| the site wanted an account | 18% |
| checkout was too long or complicated | 17% |
| the site had errors or crashed | 17% |
| the return policy wasn't good enough | 13% |
| couldn't see the total cost up front | 12% |
| their card was declined | 10% |
| not enough payment methods | 9% |

These percentages leave out the 42% who said they were just browsing and not ready to buy yet.

Baymard also says a well-designed checkout has 12 to 14 form elements, 7 to 8 of them fields to fill in. You can count yours.

And Baymard estimates that the average large online store can raise its conversion rate by 35.26% just through better checkout design, counting only the problems its research shows can be fixed. That's an average for large stores, not a promise for yours.

- [ ] **People can check out without an account.** It passes if you offer the account after the order, not before it.
- [ ] **The total cost shows up early.** It passes if shipping and any tax or fees show in the cart, not just at the last step. An estimate is fine.
- [ ] **You ask only for what you use.** Test: count the fields. It passes if you ask only for the fields on the list for your type of business, below.
- [ ] **Every field has a visible label.** It passes if the label stays above the field after you start typing. It doesn't disappear like gray text inside the box.
- [ ] **Error messages make sense.** It passes if the error shows up next to the field that's wrong, says what to fix and doesn't erase what you already typed.
- [ ] **You take the payment methods your customers ask for.** It passes if the payment methods customers ask you about (PayPal, Apple Pay, a pay-over-time option) are offered at checkout.
- [ ] **A real test goes through.** Test: on your phone, place an order or send the form the way a customer would. It passes if you get the confirmation by email or text within a few minutes, and the request reaches the person who has to handle it.

### The fields you need, by type of business

**Online store.** Keep name, phone, email and shipping address. Ask for the billing address only if it's different. Drop, or move to after the order: the required account, "confirm your email," date of birth and "how did you hear about us?"

**Services with appointments or quotes.** Keep name, phone and the service, picked from a list. Make the preferred date optional. Drop the full address and the long description of the problem, which you'll get on the phone anyway. Drop the email too, if you're going to call them.

**Lodging and reservations.** Keep the dates (or date and time), number of guests, name and phone. Drop the mailing address, the email asked twice and required accounts.

**Selling to other businesses.** Keep name, company, work phone or email, what they're looking for and estimated volume, the last two picked from lists. Drop tax ID, annual revenue and all the technical details. You'll get those in the first conversation.

**The form rules from Nielsen Norman Group,** a research firm that studies how people use websites. You can check them against your form in five minutes.

- The label sits above the field.
- Gray text inside the field doesn't stand in for a label.
- Fields go one under the other, in a single column. City, state and ZIP code can share a row.
- Optional fields say "optional," and there are one or two at most.
- The error message says exactly what's wrong and keeps what the person typed.

## 12 THE PAGE YOUR ADS LAND ON

Your ad promises a brake job at a set price. Someone clicks and lands on your home page. They hunt for the price through the menus, on your dime.

The ad page is the page people land on after they click your ad.

In Google Ads, it counts toward your Quality Score, the 1 to 10 rating Google gives each keyword. Google looks at how relevant and useful the page is to the person who clicked.

Meta and TikTok don't publish a score for your page. But there too, you pay for the click of someone who leaves without doing anything.

- [ ] **The page picks up where the ad left off.** Test: put the ad and the page side by side. It passes if, within the first five seconds, you see the same product, the same offer and the same price as in the ad.

- [ ] **There's one action to take.** It passes if there's a single main button, repeated down the page, and as few links as possible that lead somewhere else. The button can say "Order now," "Book an appointment" or "Get a quote."
- [ ] **The offer in the ad actually exists.** It passes if the discount, the stock and the deadline in the ad are good today, on the page. Google Ads doesn't allow ads that promise offers that are unavailable or hard to find.
- [ ] **You can see the main button without scrolling.** Test: open the page on your phone. It passes if the button is on the first screen. You pay for every visit here, so every person who doesn't see the button costs you money directly.
- [ ] **The parameters in the address don't get lost.** Parameters are the text added to the end of an address, like ?utm_source=facebook. They're how Google Analytics knows which ad someone came from. Test: open the page with ?utm_source=test at the end of the address. It passes if that text is still in the address bar after the page loads.

## The first screen on a phone

The first screen is what someone sees without scrolling. On your ad page, five things fit there, from top to bottom.

1. A headline that repeats the offer from the ad, in the same words.
2. One photo of the product or the work, not several that rotate on their own.
3. The price or a "from" price, plus shipping or the area you serve.
4. The main button, with the action verb: "Order now," "Book an appointment," "Get a quote."
5. A short piece of proof: your number of Google reviews, with a link to them, or your warranty.

Below that come the details, answers to questions and the button again. Take the full site menu and the blog links off this page, because every exit is a paid click that never reaches the button.

## How many people from your ads leave without doing anything

You pay to get people to your site. The question is what they do once they're there.

In Google Analytics 4 (GA4 for short), a visit is called a "session." Here we just call it a visit. A visit counts as "engaged" if it lasts longer than 10 seconds, has a key event or has at least two page views. A key event is an important action, like an order or a submitted form. The engagement rate is the share of visits that were engaged.

1. Tag your ads. At the end of the address in each Meta ad, add three tags: the source (where the person came from, for example facebook), the medium (the kind of visit, here paid) and the campaign. A ready-made example: `?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=paid&utm_campaign=summer`. If the address already has a "?", the first tag starts with "&" instead. In Google Ads, leave auto-tagging on. If you've linked the two accounts, GA4 knows the source on its own.
2. Open the report. In GA4, go to "Reports," then "Acquisition," then "Traffic acquisition." The first column in the table groups visits by channel. Click its name and switch it to "Session source /

medium." Find the row with your ad's source.

3. Add the page. Use "+" to add a second column, "Landing page + query string" (the page the person landed on).
4. Write it down and compare it the right way. Write down the engagement rate of your ad page for the paid source. Compare it with the same page and the same source in past months; write it in every month in the table under "The 30-minute monthly routine," which has a column for it. Don't compare it with the rest of your site. People from ads, especially from Meta, almost always have a lower rate than people from Google search or who typed your address, however good the page is. If you send the same ad to two pages, compare those two pages with each other, on the same source.

If the rate is low, or it drops after a change, the page is usually slow or doesn't match the ad. What that costs you in dollars, you'll see in the bed-and-breakfast example under "What a fix is worth."

# 13 ACCESSIBILITY, THE COMMON-SENSE MINIMUM

Try reading your site on your phone outside, in bright sun.

Light gray text you can't read is text a customer with weaker eyesight can't read either.

You don't need anything technical here. You need your own eyes, one free tool and a little common sense.

A site that someone with poor eyesight can use is usually easier for everyone to use.

There's a US fact behind this too. The Department of Justice says the ADA applies to everything businesses open to the public offer, including what they offer on the web. In its March 18, 2022 guidance, it also says it doesn't have a regulation with detailed technical standards for business websites, that businesses can currently choose how they make their sites accessible, and that existing standards like WCAG give helpful guidance. The barriers it lists include poor color contrast, images without text descriptions and sites you can't use with a keyboard, which is close to what you check below. WCAG is published by W3C; the checks below use version 2.2.

- [ ] **The text has enough contrast.** Test: wave.webaim.org, in the "Contrast Errors" section. It passes if you have at least 4.5:1 for regular text and 3:1 for large text, as WCAG requires. Large text means about 24 px and up, or about 18.5 px in bold.
- [ ] **Images that carry information have alt text.** Test: in WAVE, the icon next to each image shows you its alt text. It passes if the text describes the image, for example "cast iron skillet on a gas stove, seen from above," not a list of keywords.

- [ ] **You can use the site with just a keyboard.** Test: press Tab several times. It passes if you can always see where you are and you reach every link and button, the form and, where there is one, the menu.
- [ ] **Buttons and links have text.** It passes if WAVE doesn't flag any empty links or buttons, like ones with only an icon.

# 14 TRACKING

Yesterday your store had three orders. Google Analytics says five. Meta says four. Your developer says everything's fine.

The real number is the one in your store. Everything else you check with screenshots, not reassurances.

This matters because without tracking, you don't know which ad brings in orders and which one only spends money. Ad platforms learn from what you send them. If you don't send them your orders, they look for people who click, not people who buy.

And if you skip this section, every other fix in this checklist is a fix you make on faith.

## Checks you do on your own

- [ ] **GA4 is getting data.** Test: open the "Realtime" report in Google Analytics, then visit your site on your phone. If a cookie banner shows up, accept it. If you decline or ignore it on a site that uses basic consent mode (explained below), Google sends nothing and the test fails for no reason. It passes if you see yourself in the report within a few seconds.

- [ ] **Important actions are key events.** Test: in GA4, look for the events on the list for your type of business (the list is below, in the message to your developer) and check the star next to them. It passes if the star is on. How to turn it on is at the end of this section.

- [ ] **The numbers line up.** Test: compare last month's orders or leads in your store or your CRM (the software where you keep your leads and customers) with the ones in GA4. It passes if you know where the difference comes from.

A working benchmark, ours and not a Google rule: if your site has no cookie banner, or sends data even when someone declines it (advanced mode), the difference should be under 1 in 10 (10%). Ad blockers and some browsers' privacy settings also keep a share of visits out of GA4, so a small gap is normal. In basic mode, the orders of people who decline the banner never reach GA4, so the gap is bigger. Your developer can tell you how much of it comes from that.

Your baseline is always the real orders in your store or CRM. Compare Meta's numbers only for direction, because Meta counts orders by its own rules.

## Checks you do with your developer

Your part is to ask for the check and get the screenshots.

- [ ] **Every important action reaches GA4 and Meta, once.** Test: your developer opens tagassistant.google.com, does every action on the list on your site and checks that the event shows up. For Meta, they use the Meta Ads Data Advisor Chrome extension (formerly Meta Pixel Helper): they do an action, add to cart for example, and look at the event. If your site also sends orders to Meta straight from the store or the server (Conversions API), they also check in "Events Manager," under "Test events," which is where server events show up. It passes if each event shows up once, with no errors.

If your site shows a cookie banner, Google's tags have to respect the choice people make in it (consent mode). In basic mode, Google tags don't load until someone accepts, and if they decline, nothing goes to Google. In advanced mode, the tags load right away and send measurements without cookies while consent is declined, and Google fills in the gaps with modeling. You and your developer pick the mode together. The Meta pixel, the code that tells Meta what people from your ads do on your site, has to respect the banner too.

- [ ] **Your cookie banner is tied to tracking.** Test: your developer opens your site with tagassistant.google.com, declines cookies and looks at the consent status the tool shows. You get the screenshots. It passes if the screenshot shows the decline, and a second screenshot shows the Meta pixel respects it too. If your site has no cookie banner, cross this check out.

## Message to your developer

Copy it, fill in what's in the curly brackets and keep only the list for your type of business.

COPY THIS

Hi {name},

Could you check whether our site sends these events to GA4, using Google's recommended names, for {type of business} from the list below?

I need screenshots:
- from Tag Assistant, for each event;
- from the Meta Ads Data Advisor extension, for each event;
- from Events Manager, under "Test events," if the site also sends orders to Meta from the server;
- from Tag Assistant, showing a decline in the cookie banner (if we have one);
- one showing the Meta pixel respects that decline too.

Online store: key event purchase; the steps before it: view_item, add_to_cart, begin_checkout. First check whether the store platform already sends them through its Google integration, so they don't fire twice.

Services with appointments or quotes: key events generate_lead (only after the form is successfully submitted, not when the button is clicked), click_phone and click_text.

Lodging and reservations: key event purchase if guests pay online; otherwise generate_lead for the booking request. If the booking system is on another domain, it has to send the event back to GA4.

Selling to other businesses: key event generate_lead; then qualify_lead when a lead is marked as a good fit in the CRM, and close_convert_lead when it's marked as won. The last two only reach GA4 if the CRM is connected to GA4. Every lead in the CRM needs to show which source it came from.

Please use the names exactly as written, so reports and the Google Ads link recognize them with less setup. The key event star still has to be turned on, and the conversion still has to be imported into Google Ads. Google doesn't have a recommended name for phone and text clicks, so let's use click_phone and click_text everywhere.

Thanks!

## How to turn on the star

1. In Google Analytics, go to "Admin."
2. Under "Data display," open "Events."
3. Find the event on the "Recent events" tab and click the star next to it.

You need the Marketer role or higher on the Google Analytics property for your site.

# EXTRA CHECKS FOR YOUR TYPE OF BUSINESS

**Online store.** Ask your developer for product structured data, with the price and stock shown on the page, and check it with the test from section 7. Check the shipping cost in the cart, guest checkout and the links to your return policy and privacy policy in the footer. Sections 10 and 11 matter most.

**Services with appointments or quotes,** like a repair shop, a clinic, remodeling or plumbing. Check that every service page has a short form or a booking calendar. Check your "from" price, the area you serve and that your Google profile is complete. Sections 6 and 8 matter most. At a clinic, also watch what you promise in your copy, because ad platforms have strict rules for health claims, and the page your ad sends people to gets reviewed too.

**Lodging and reservations,** like an inn, a hotel or an event venue. Check that someone can book from a phone in a few steps. Put your rates and menu on the page as text, not in a PDF or an image, and keep your hours the same on your site and on Google. Since May 12, 2025, the FTC's rule on unfair or deceptive fees requires short-term lodging (hotels, motels, inns, vacation rentals) to show the total price, with mandatory fees like a resort or cleaning fee included, more prominently than other pricing. Taxes and government charges can be left out of that total, but have to be shown before you ask for payment. Sections 2 and 6 matter most.

**Selling to other businesses.** Check that you have a page for each type of customer or industry, and case studies published with the client's permission. Your form asks about the company and the volume, and the contact person has a name. Sections 8 and 10 matter most.

# YOUR SCORE

| SECTION | POSSIBLE POINTS | YOUR POINTS |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Speed | 4 | |
| 2. Mobile | 5 | |
| 3. Indexing | 7 | |
| 4. Titles and descriptions | 4 | |
| 5. Headings on the page | 3 | |
| 6. Google Business Profile | 6 | |
| 7. Structured data | 3 | |

| SECTION | POSSIBLE POINTS | YOUR POINTS |
|---|---|---|
| 8. Page content | 4 | |
| 9. Internal links | 4 | |
| 10. Trust | 6 | |
| 11. Forms and checkout | 7 | |
| 12. The ad page | 5 | |
| 13. Accessibility | 4 | |
| 14. Tracking | 5 | |
| **Total** | **67**, minus the points that don't apply to your business | |

Your score shows how far you've come from one review to the next, not how you stack up against your competitors. Where you lost points matters more than how many. A missed point in indexing or tracking can cost you more than a missed point anywhere else.

# THE ORDER TO FIX THINGS IN

You marked the five-minute fixes that cost nothing while you checked, and you do them right after you add up your score; they don't go in the plan. Do the rest in the order below, which starts with the three problems that are worse than all the others.

1. Indexing (3) and tracking (14). That's where the three problems from the beginning live. If Google can't see the page or you can't see the orders, you won't feel the other fixes and you can't measure them.
2. Trust (10) and forms (11). This is where you lose people who were already ready to buy. If you're a local business (customers come to you, or you go to them), do your Google profile (6) now too. That's what brings in the calls.
3. The ad page (12), if you spend money on ads. You pay for every visit that gets lost.
4. Speed (1) and mobile (2). Look in Google Analytics at how many of your visits come from phones. The more there are, the sooner you fix these.
5. Everything else, one fix a week.

The sections that matter most for your type of business, from "Extra checks for your type of business," you do along with step 2.

# WHAT A FIX IS WORTH: THE MATH WITH YOUR NUMBERS

Your developer quotes you $1,500 to let people check out without an account and to show the shipping cost in the cart. You're holding the quote and wondering whether it's worth it.

They say yes. Your gut may say no. The math settles it.

The five-minute fixes, the ones that cost nothing, you just do. The ones that cost money or a lot of hours, you run the numbers on before you pay anyone. The same math also shows you what you lose for every month you put off a free fix.

Nobody can tell you ahead of time how much a specific fix will raise your sales. The math tells you how much it has to raise them so you don't lose money.

It takes two steps.

## Example: $1,500 for checkout without an account

Say you run an online store that sells cast iron and induction-ready cookware. You get 90 orders a month, a number you take from your store. Your average order is $95 and your margin is 30%. Your site failed two checks: "People can check out without an account" and "The total cost shows up early." Your developer wants $1,500 for both.

**Step 1: what you make on one order.** 30% of $95 is $28.50.

Use the order value without the sales tax you collect, since that money goes to the state. Your margin is what's left of the price after every cost of the sale: the product or materials, the shipping you pay for, the payment processing fee.

**Step 2: how many extra orders pay for the fix in three months.** $1,500 over three months is $500 a month. $500 divided by $28.50 is 17.54. Round up: you need 18 more orders a month.

Now comes the question that counts: 18 orders out of how many people?

In GA4, open the "Events" report and find the event for starting checkout. Read the column that counts people, "Total users," not the one that counts events, because the same person can start checkout more than once.

Say it shows 400. So 400 people started checkout that month. 90 finished, which means 310 gave up.

Out of 310 you need 18. That's about 6 in 100 (5.8%).

Is that a lot or a little? In Baymard's survey of US online shoppers (figures last updated October 2026), 18 in 100 of those who abandoned a cart for a reason other than just browsing said they left because the site wanted them to create an account. That's not a promise for your store. But 6 in 100 is well under 18 in 100.

Our working threshold (ours, not a rule from any study): if the share of people you need to win back is at most half the share who leave for the exact reason you're fixing, the fix is worth it. Here, half of 18 in 100 is 9. You need 6. So it's worth it. If you'd needed more than 9, you'd look for a cheaper fix or a bigger problem.

And the math is on the cautious side. It counts only the account reason, even though the same fix also brings back people who leave at the last step when they finally see the shipping cost.

Two months later, you check: are you at about 108 orders a month?

**Your math**

| STEP | HOW YOU FIGURE IT | RESULT |
|---|---|---|
| What you make on one order or one customer | Average value × margin | |
| How many extra orders a month | Cost of the fix ÷ 3 ÷ what you make on one order, rounded up | |
| How many people you lose at the step you're fixing | From GA4 or your own records, same month | |
| What share of them you need to win back | Extra orders ÷ people lost | |

## The same math for a repair shop, an inn and a company that sells to businesses

All three businesses are made up, with round numbers. Put in yours.

### AUTO REPAIR SHOP: THE COST IS YOUR TIME

A repair shop in Columbus, Ohio. Its Google profile shows, under "Performance," 120 taps a month on the call button. For one week, the owner asks everyone who calls "Where'd you get our number?" and writes down whether the call turned into an appointment. That's how he learns that one in three calls from Google becomes a booked job (not every tap becomes a call, so the math below is on the optimistic side). The average job is $450 with a 40% margin: he keeps $180, so one call is worth about $60.

The profile failed three checks in section 6: the category, the details matching everywhere and the reviews. Fixing it takes about two hours a week, or about 8 hours and 40 minutes a month. At $75 an hour for his time, that's about $650. He needs 11 more calls a month, about 9% more than the 120 he gets now.

Compare one three-month stretch with another, and keep the season in mind. If your fall is always busy (tire swaps before winter, say), compare this fall with last fall, not with summer.

### BED-AND-BREAKFAST: THE COST IS AD MONEY

An 8-room bed-and-breakfast in Vermont spends $2,400 a month on Meta, at $0.80 a click: 3,000 clicks. In GA4, its ad page has an "Engagement rate" of 40%. That means 1,800 visits with no engagement at all, and the inn paid $1,440 for them. It gets 25 bookings a month, so one booking costs $96 today; of the 1,200 engaged visits, about 2% book.

PageSpeed shows 6 seconds before the top photo appears on mobile, because of a 4 MB photo. At 45% engagement you'd get 150 more engaged visits and about 3 more bookings on the same budget. At 55%, about 34 bookings, about $70 each. That's an assumption, not a promise: it assumes the people who stay book at the same rate. Clicks in Meta and visits in GA4 never match exactly, so the math is approximate.

Bottom line: compressing the photo takes a few minutes and costs nothing. Do it today, before you raise the budget.

### PACKAGING MACHINES FOR COMMERCIAL BAKERIES: THE COST IS YOUR SALESPERSON'S TIME

The form (name, email, message) brings in 30 inquiries a month, only 6 of them from companies that are a good fit. The salesperson spends about 30 minutes on each one. An average contract is $80,000 with a 15% margin, so $12,000. One in four good-fit leads becomes a contract, so each one is worth $3,000. The 24 poor-fit inquiries eat 12 hours a month: at $50 an hour, $600.

The owner wants two new fields: "Company" and "Estimated monthly volume." A single good-fit lead lost costs $3,000, more than the $600 saved. That risk is real because, according to Nielsen Norman Group, every field you cut from a form raises the share of people who send it, so every field you add has a price. That's why the new fields are drop-down lists, with "Not sure yet" as one of the options.

For three months, track the total and the good-fit leads. Under 15 good-fit leads in three months (under 5 a month, when you have 6 now)? Take the fields out and ask those questions on the first call. That threshold is a working one.

# WHO FIXES WHAT

| THE FIX | YOU DO IT | YOUR DEVELOPER DOES IT | YOUR WEB HOST OR PLATFORM DOES IT |
|---|---|---|---|
| Titles, descriptions, copy, questions and answers | yes | | |
| Compressed photos and alt text | yes | | |
| Google profile and reviews | yes | | |
| Fields removed from forms, guest checkout | yes, if your platform has the setting | if the form is custom-built | |
| noindex, robots.txt, sitemap | the WordPress checkbox and submitting the sitemap in Search Console | the tag in the code and a hand-made robots.txt | |
| 301 redirects | yes, if your platform has a page for them (Shopify and many WordPress plugins do) | when the whole site moves | |
| LCP, INP, CLS | photos and extra plugins | code, fonts, scripts | a slow server and 5xx errors |
| The key event star in GA4 | yes | | |
| Structured data, events sent by the site, pixel and consent mode | | yes | |

# COMMON MISTAKES

**Your new site doesn't show up on Google at all after a month.** In WordPress, the "Discourage search engines from indexing this site" box is still checked, or your developer left noindex on from when they were building the site. Uncheck the box or take the tag out, then submit the sitemap and request indexing for the home page.

**You blocked a page in robots.txt and it still shows up on Google.** robots.txt stops Google from reading the page, so it can't see the noindex tag either. Unblock the page and put noindex on it.

**Your Google traffic dropped after you launched a new site.** The addresses changed and there are no redirects from the old ones. Put a 301 from each old address to its new match, and get the list of old addresses from Search Console, for the period before the move.

**You score 95 in PageSpeed, but Core Web Vitals fails.** The 0 to 100 score is a lab test, while Google judges by real data from your visitors' phones. Go by the box with that data and fix things following section 1.

**The title on Google isn't the one you wrote.** Google picks a different title when yours is just the business name, "Home" or half finished, has an old year in it (like "2023"), is nearly the same on lots of pages or doesn't describe the page. The fix: a title used on that page only, one that describes it exactly, using the formulas in section 4.

**GA4 shows more orders than your store.** The `purchase` event fires twice: once from the platform's integration and once from code added by hand, or when the thank-you page reloads. Tag Assistant helps you find the duplicate, and you keep just one.

**Meta and Google together report more orders than you actually had.** Each platform counts orders by its own rules, and the same order shows up in both. Your baseline is the real orders in your store or CRM, because the platforms only show you a direction.

**The form says "Thank you," but the leads don't reach anyone.** The notification goes to an old email address or lands in spam. Send notifications to two addresses and do the monthly test from the routine below, with a request sent from your phone.

**Your ads bring cheap clicks and no leads.** Often the ad sends people to the home page or to a page that doesn't match it, and the fix is an ad page built following section 12. But broken tracking (leads come in but don't get counted) or the wrong audience can cause the same symptom. First check, following section 14, that leads are actually being counted.

**Your Google profile got suspended.** Usually because of extra words in the name, a virtual office address or an address where nobody works. Use your real name and your real address or service area. Then request reinstatement from your profile.

**The photos look great, but the page loads slowly.** The photos went up straight from the phone or the photographer, several MB each. Compress them following the steps in section 1, starting with the top photo.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**How soon will I see results on Google?**
Google says some changes show up in a few hours and others take several months. After you request indexing, Google's visit can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks, and asking again doesn't speed it up. Judge a fix after at least a month, comparing periods of the same length in Search Console.

**Do I need a blog to show up on Google?**
No. You need pages that answer what people search for: a page for each service or category, with the price, the timeline and answers to questions. An article is worth writing when it answers a question your customers ask you and links to the page that sells.

**Can I use the product descriptions from my supplier?**
You can, but every other store that sells the same product has them too. Google says duplicate content isn't against its rules, but it doesn't help you: out of several identical pages, Google picks one. Rewrite at least the products that bring in the most money. Add what the supplier doesn't say: real measurements, your own photos, answers to questions you've been asked.

**Do keywords in the page code still matter?**
Google doesn't use the "meta keywords" tag at all. What matters are the words in your title, in your page headings and in your text, written the way your customers say them.

**Should I pay for an SEO plugin or subscription?**
Not for this checklist: every tool in it is free. In WordPress, a free SEO plugin helps you write titles and descriptions and builds your sitemap. A paid keyword tool is worth it only once you're regularly writing new pages and articles.

**My competitor has fake reviews. What do I do?**
Report them from Google Maps, from each review's menu, as a violation of Google's content policy. Don't answer with fake reviews of your own: you'd put your profile at risk, and fake reviews are also against the FTC rule. Real reviews, requested from every customer, count for more over time.

**My developer says everything's fine, but the checklist fails. Who's right?**
The data. Send them the screenshots from PageSpeed and Search Console with the numbers that fail. Ask them to send you the same screenshots after the fix, because a check passes when it passes the test, not when someone says it's fixed.

**My site is on Shopify, WordPress or a builder like Wix or Squarespace. Can I fix things myself?**
A good part of it, yes. Titles, descriptions, photos, copy and forms you change in your site's admin panel, and your profile and reviews in your Google account. Technical speed work, redirects, structured data and GA4 events usually go to your developer. The "Who fixes what" table shows who does each one.

**How often should I redo the checklist?**
All of it, every three months, on the same three pages. Redo sections 3 and 14 the same day after any big change: a new theme, a new platform, a new domain or a new page you send ads to.

# THE 30-MINUTE MONTHLY ROUTINE

Do it on the first business day of the month and put the numbers in the same table, so you can see which way they move from one month to the next.

| WHAT YOU CHECK | WHERE | WHAT YOU LOOK FOR |
|---|---|---|
| Clicks and impressions from Google | Search Console, the performance report, the "Queries" tab, then "Pages" | which searches and pages dropped compared with last month |
| Pages dropped from the index | Search Console, the indexing report | whether "not indexed" pages jumped, and with what message |
| Speed | Search Console, the Core Web Vitals report | new addresses under "Poor" |
| Your Google profile | "Performance," in your profile | calls, direction requests, website clicks and reviews you haven't answered |
| Checkout or your form | your phone | a real test, start to finish, with the confirmation received |
| Orders and leads: store vs. GA4 vs. ads | your store or CRM, GA4, your ad platforms | whether the gaps between them have grown |
| Engagement rate on your ad page | GA4, the steps in section 12 | whether it dropped compared with last month, on the same source |

| MONTH | CLICKS FROM GOOGLE | CALLS FROM YOUR PROFILE | ORDERS OR LEADS (REAL NUMBER) | AD PAGE ENGAGEMENT RATE | NOTES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

# YOUR ACTION PLAN

**Before week 1.** Get admin access to every account, tied to your business email, then go through the checklist on your three pages, in pieces, and add up your score. The four weeks below start after the score.

**Week 1.** Fix every point you missed in indexing (3) and tracking (14).

**Week 2.** Trust (10), forms (11) and the sections that matter most for your type of business, from "Extra checks for your type of business." If you're a local business (customers come to you, or you go to them), this is also when you complete your Google profile (6) and start asking for reviews. After every change, run the real checkout or form test from your phone.

**Week 3.** The ad page (12), then speed (1) and mobile (2). Compress the top photos and send your developer the ready-made message for the rest.

**Week 4.** Titles and descriptions on your other important pages, starting with the ones that sell the most (4). Your Google profile (6), if you didn't do it in week 2. The question sheet from section 8, so you know what to write on your pages next month.

**After the first month.** One fix a week from the table below, and the 30-minute routine at the start of each month. Three months from now, redo the whole checklist on the same three pages and compare your score.

| WHAT I'M FIXING | ON WHICH PAGE | WHO'S ON IT | BY WHEN | DONE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | [ ] |
| | | | | [ ] |
| | | | | [ ] |
| | | | | [ ] |
| | | | | [ ] |
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HIGH-UP ADS

# WANT A SECOND PAIR OF EYES ON YOUR NUMBERS?

Going through the checklist is the easy part. The hard part comes later, when you have to decide what a customer is worth to you, what to track, and when to stop. You can get our help with that in two ways, and both are free.

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One marketing topic a week, written for business owners, with something you can try the next day. One email a week, and you can unsubscribe in one click.

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Pick a day

highupads.ro/en/session

The audit is for businesses that can spend at least $1,500 a month on ads, and calls run between 9 am and 2 pm ET. Oana won't follow up with a sales pitch. If you want to work with us after that, you tell us.

