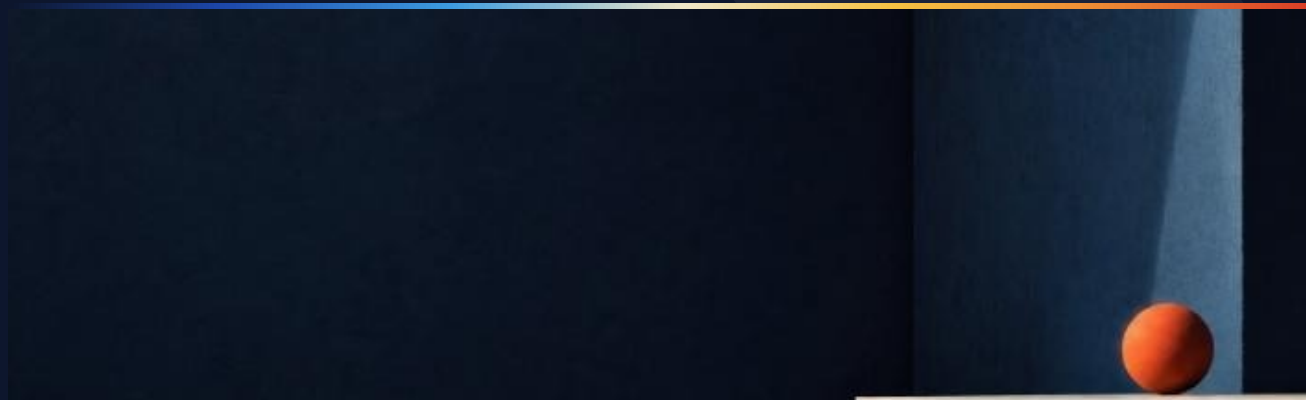




FREE RESOURCE • LOCAL SEO • 2026 EDITION

Houston Local SEO Checklist.

Google names three things behind local ranking. One of them is how far you are from the person searching, and you cannot change that. The other two are entirely yours. This is those two, in 24 checkpoints and a score.



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EDITION

2026
36 points possible

TIME TO COMPLETE

About two hours
No paid tools

How to use this.

The boxes are live. Tick them in any PDF reader, save the file, and your progress stays put.

Open it in any PDF reader

The checkboxes are live form fields. Preview, Acrobat and most browsers will let you tick them and save the file with your progress kept.

Start with section one, always

The sections are ordered by consequence, not by category. Section one is the rules that get a profile taken down. A suspended profile ranks nowhere, so nothing else on this list survives it.

Answer for the profile Google shows today

Not the one you remember setting up. Open your Business Profile in one tab and your website in another, and check as you go.

Score honestly

A checkpoint counts only if it is true right now, across the whole business. Half-done is not done. The score is for you, and a flattering one is worth nothing.

Do it again in ninety days

Local SEO is maintenance, not a project. Hours drift, categories get added by well-meaning staff, and duplicate profiles appear on their own. There is a dated box on the scoring page for exactly this.

HAVE THESE OPEN

- Your Google Business Profile dashboard
- Your website, on a phone
- Google Maps, signed out
- PageSpeed Insights, for the last section only

YOU DO NOT NEED

- A rank tracker or an SEO subscription
- A developer, until the very last checkpoint
- Anyone from this agency

BEFORE YOU START

Every rule cited in this document comes from Google's own published guidelines and documentation, checked in 2026. Where Google states a number, we quote Google's number.

Nothing here needs a paid tool, and nothing is held back to make you call us.

Will your profile survive?

Every other checklist starts with optimisation. Optimisation is worthless on a profile Google removes. These eight rules are the ones Houston owners break without knowing.

The eight that get profiles pulled

- ☐ 1. Your profile name is the name on your storefront and invoices, with no added services or city
Google prohibits service, product and location information in the name. "Katy AC Repair LLC" is fine only if that is the real, signed name.
- ☐ 2. The address is a place your team actually works, not a mailbox or a virtual office
Google states that P.O. boxes and rented mailing addresses at locations you do not operate from are not eligible.
- ☐ 3. If customers come to you, there is permanent fixed signage with your business name at that address
Walk outside and look. Google requires permanent signage at the listed address. Co-working desks need clear signage and your own staff.
- ☐ 4. If you work from home or drive to customers, the street address is hidden and only a service area shows
Google's own example is a plumber running the business from a residential address. Clear the address from the profile.
- ☐ 5. Your service area does not stretch beyond about two hours of driving
Google's limit. Houston to Austin sits inside it. Houston to Dallas does not. Listing all of Texas is a breach, not an ambition.
- ☐ 6. There is exactly one profile for this location, with no old duplicate from a past owner or agency
Search your business name in Maps, then search your address. Duplicates usually surface under an old phone number.
- ☐ 7. The phone number is a local number that rings your business, not a central call centre
Google asks for a local number over a call centre. A tracking number is fine only if it forwards and matches your site.
- ☐ 8. If the profile is suspended, an appeal is filed and you have not made a replacement
Google says do not create a new profile while an appeal is under review. Have registration, a licence or a utility bill ready.

WHAT THE OTHER CHECKLISTS LEAVE OUT

We read the three local SEO checklists ranking highest for this term in 2026. Not one mentions signage, the two-hour service area limit, or what to do when a profile is suspended. Those are the three fastest ways to lose every ranking you have.

THE TEN-MINUTE VERSION OF THIS PAGE

Open Maps on your phone, signed out. Search your business name, then your address, then your phone number. You are looking for three things: a second profile you forgot about, a name that does not match your door, and an address showing when it should be hidden.

If all three come back clean, this page costs you ten minutes a quarter for the rest of the life of the business.

What Google can match you on.

Google calls this relevance: how well your profile matches what somebody typed. It is the cheapest of the three factors to fix and the one most often left half done.

Relevance

- ☐ 9. The profile is verified
Google says verification confirms you are authorised to represent the business, and that verified profiles show up more.
- ☐ 10. Your primary category is the most specific one that finishes the sentence "this business IS a..."
Google's own test is IS a, not HAS a. A law firm with a notary on staff is not a notary public.
- ☐ 11. You use as few categories as possible, not every one that could apply
Google asks for as few as needed and adds the broader parent categories itself. Extra categories dilute rather than widen.
- ☐ 12. Every service you actually sell is listed in the services section
Dashboard, then Services. Most owners fill this in once at setup and never open it again.
- ☐ 13. Regular hours are set and correct today
If you serve customers at your address, Google expects you staffed and able to receive them during the hours you publish.
- ☐ 14. Special hours are set for the next public holiday
Google calls out special hours specifically. Thanksgiving and the winter break are where Houston service businesses quietly lose calls.
- ☐ 15. The first sentence of your description says what you do and where
Read it out loud. If a stranger cannot tell your trade and your part of Houston from sentence one, rewrite it.
- ☐ 16. Your business name, address and phone number are written identically on your profile and your website
Google asks that the name be used consistently across storefront, website and stationery. "Ste" on one and "Suite" on the other is the usual culprit.

COUNTS AS DONE

- Every service you sell, written the way a customer would say it
- Hours you will actually answer the phone
- One category that names your trade

DOES NOT COUNT

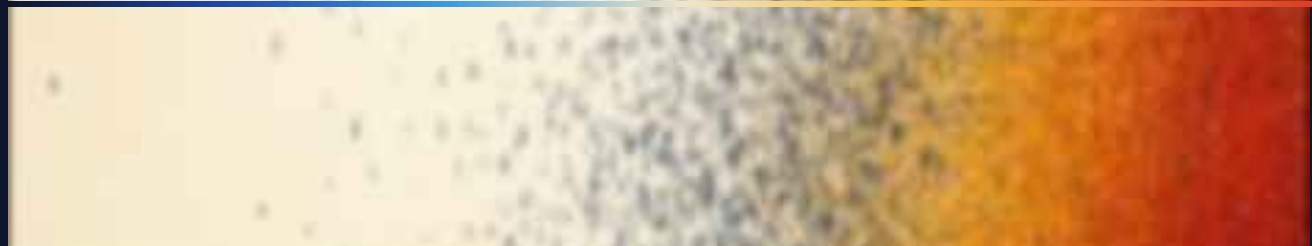
- Services you would take if asked
- Hours you meant to update in the spring
- Nine categories in case one of them lands

THE CATEGORY TEST ALMOST EVERYONE FAILS

Owners add categories the way they add keywords, on the theory that more coverage means more chances. Google's filter is the opposite: as few as possible, each one specific, each finishing the sentence "this business IS a...". Every extra category spreads your relevance thinner instead of widening it.

What makes you the known one.

Prominence is Google's word for how well known you are. It counts your reviews and it counts who links to you. This section is slow, and it compounds.



Prominence

- ☐ 17. You ask every customer for a review, not only the ones you expect to be happy
Google prohibits selectively soliciting positive reviews or discouraging negative ones. Most review software is built to do exactly that.
- ☐ 18. No review has been paid for, discounted, or traded for a free service
Google bans payment, discounts and free goods or services in exchange for reviews, directly or in kind.
- ☐ 19. Staff never ask customers to leave a review while they are still on the premises
Google prohibits requiring or pressuring people to review while on site, and prohibits setting review quotas for staff.
- ☐ 20. You have replied to every review from the last ninety days, including the bad ones
Google says responding shows you value customer feedback. A calm reply to a one-star review sells better than the five-star above it.
- ☐ 21. At least one Houston organisation you genuinely belong to links to your website
Google counts how many websites link to your business. Chamber, trade association, supplier directory, the team you sponsor.
- ☐ 22. Your name, address and phone number read identically everywhere they appear online
Search your phone number in quotes. Every result should show the same address in the same format.
- ☐ 23. Your homepage reaches Largest Contentful Paint in under 2.5 seconds on mobile
Run it through PageSpeed Insights. Google's threshold for a good experience is 2.5 seconds at the 75th percentile of real visits.
- ☐ 24. The website link on your profile goes to a page about that location and its services, not a generic homepage
If you have one location, the homepage is the right answer. If you have three, it almost never is.

THE ADVICE THAT CAN COST YOU THE PROFILE

A lot of review software sends unhappy customers to a private feedback form and happy ones to Google. It is sold as reputation management. Google's policy prohibits selectively soliciting positive reviews and discouraging negative ones.

If your review tool does this, it is a liability sitting inside your marketing budget. Ask the vendor directly, in writing, whether every customer gets the same link.

Score yourself.

One point for every box you ticked in sections one to three, so 24 so far. Six of those checkpoints carry extra weight because they can take everything else to zero. Tick them again here for two points each.

THE SIX THAT CAN ZERO THE REST

- | | |
|---|-------|
| ☐ Profile name carries no added services or city | 2 pts |
| ☐ Permanent signage at the address, or the address is hidden | 2 pts |
| ☐ Service area inside about two hours of driving | 2 pts |
| ☐ Exactly one profile, no duplicates anywhere | 2 pts |
| ☐ Reviews asked of everyone, never only the happy ones | 2 pts |
| ☐ Profile verified | 2 pts |

SCORE OUT OF 36



0 to 14 **At risk**

Something on your profile breaks Google's own guidelines. Fix section one this week. Nothing else you do will hold until you have.

15 to 26 **Unstable**

The profile survives, but Google cannot match you on much. The gaps in section two are cheap, quick, and costing you calls this month.

27 to 36 **Solid**

The housekeeping is done. From here your ranking moves on reviews and links, which take months rather than afternoons. That is the right problem to have.

WHAT A SCORE DOES AND DOES NOT TELL YOU

This number measures the work that is inside your control. It does not measure your competition, your budget, or how far your unit sits from the middle of the search. A 34 in a saturated trade can still sit below a 28 with a longer history and more reviews.

What it does tell you is whether you are losing on things you could fix this month. Write today's date and your score somewhere you will find it, then run the sheet again in ninety days.

TODAY'S DATE	SCORE OUT OF 36	RE-RUN ON
_____	_____	_____

What to fix first.

The order matters more than the list. Work down this table and stop worrying about the rest until the row above it is done.

WHEN	WHAT	WHY IT SITS HERE
Today	Any unticked box in section 01	A pulled profile ranks nowhere.
This week	Verify, then fix the primary category	Nothing is matched until both are right.
This week	Hide the address if you drive to customers	The most common Houston breach.
This month	Hours, special hours, services, description	An afternoon of work, visible in days.
This month	Reply to every review from the last quarter	Free, and it changes what browsers read.
Ongoing	Ask every customer, every time	The only lever that compounds.
Ongoing	One real local link a month	Twelve a year beats a hundred bought.
When you can	Get mobile LCP under 2.5 seconds	Slowest to fix, and a developer job.

One honest note on distance. Google is explicit that how far you are from the searcher is one of the three factors, and no amount of work moves your building. What the work does is decide whether you win the searches you are close enough to win. Most Houston businesses lose those on housekeeping, not on geography.

WORTH DOING YOURSELF

- Everything in sections one and two
- Replying to reviews
- Asking every customer, every time
- Joining one local organisation that links out

WORTH PAYING FOR

- Page speed work on the site
- Untangling duplicate or suspended profiles
- Location pages, if you have more than one

A word on the last row. Page speed is real and Google publishes a threshold for it, but it is the slowest thing on this list to move and the only one that usually needs somebody else's calendar. Do not let it become the reason the first seven rows never get done.

IF YOU ONLY DO ONE THING

Search your own business name in Google Maps, on your phone, signed out. Then search your address. If two profiles appear, or the name is not the name on your door, stop reading and fix that.

It outranks everything else in this document, and it is the one thing here that can undo a year of good work in an afternoon.

Scored under 27?

Most of this list is an afternoon of work. Knowing which afternoon, and in what order, is the part that is hard.

Send your score, get a read-out

Email your total and your domain. We will tell you which three checkpoints are costing you the most, and roughly what each is worth.

What it costs

Nothing, and there is no call to sit through. Some people who send a score later want the work done by somebody. Often that is not us.

What comes back

One page. Your three weakest checkpoints, in the order to fix them, written out. No deck, and no proposal stapled to it.

If you would rather we did it

We build Webflow sites and run local SEO for Houston professional services firms. That conversation starts the same way, with your score.

One last thing, and it is the reason this document does not hold anything back. A checklist that hides the useful part to force a phone call is obvious to everybody who reads it. If you work through these 24 checkpoints and never speak to us, the document did its job.

SEND US YOUR SCORE

Email your total and your domain to the address below. You will get the read-out back inside two working days.

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