Google My Business - Dealing with Crisis
Part 1: Claiming Your GMB Listing & Updating (Some) Information (Hours, Closures, etc.)

Where does everyone go to look for information on your business?

Believe it or not, it's your Google My Business (GMB) listing they look up on their browser. It's always a good idea to keep your GMB listing up-to-date in non-pandemic times, but it's much more important to have key messaging available on your listing during crises.

Google My Business is only for businesses that serve customers at a bricks and mortar location.

Businesses that operate online only cannot claim a listing. A business is eligible to claim a listing as long as it has a permanent location of some sort, staffed during certain hours.

Verified businesses on GMB are twice as likely to be considered reputable by users, says Google, not me.

The first thing you need to do is claim your GMB listing if you haven't already done so. If you haven't created one yet, it's a very simple procedure.

A word of caution though, due to pandemic mayhem, Google has temporarily limited some of its features. This may also include claiming your business listing. This is because they have limited eyes reviewing information. Every piece of information you change on your GMB goes through a quick review. Some information is easy enough to review and approve, other may require some more investigation on Google's part.

Create Your Google My Business Listing

Here's how you can create your GMB listing (feature may not be available under current circumstances).

1. On your computer, sign in to [Google My Business](#).
2. Sign in to your Google/Gmail account, or create one. Then, click **Next**.
   - You can also sign up for Google Suite, using your business email domain, since this account will be a dedicated business account.
3. Enter your business name or address. If your business doesn't have a physical location but works in a service area, you can [list the area instead](#). Then, click **Next**.
4. Choose if you want your business location to appear on Google Maps.
   - If you serve customers at your business address:
     1. Enter your [business address](#).
     2. Click **Next**.
        Note: If you also serve customers outside your business address, you'll have the option to list your service area(s) as well.
   - If you don't serve customers at your business address:
     1. Enter your [business address](#).
     2. At the bottom, click **I deliver goods and services to my customers**.
     3. List your service areas, then click **Next**.
5. Search for and select a business category. Then, click **Next**.
6. Enter a business phone number or website, and click **Finish**.
7. Select a verification option.

Claiming Your Google My Business Listing

This is a simpler process if your listing has already been created, which is highly likely.

1. On your computer, open a browser or Google Maps.
2. In the search bar, enter the business name.
3. Click the business name and choose the correct one.

4. Click **Claim this business > Manage now.**
    ○ To choose a different business, click **I own or manage another business**.
5. Select a verification option, and follow the on-screen steps.

Here's a third scenario: **Requesting Ownership of Your Google My Business Listing**

If a Business Profile on Google has already been verified and [you're authorized to manage the profile](#), you can request ownership from the current profile owner. If you try to access a claimed chain profile, you can also verify as a site manager.

If you don't find a "Claim this Business" or "Own this business" link on the Business Profile, you're likely already an owner for the business. On your Google My Business profile, search for a "You manage this business profile" badge. If you already own a business, it should automatically be connected to your Google email account.

What to do after you've requested ownership?

Once you've requested ownership, the current profile owner will have 3-7 days to respond. You can check the status of your request by signing in to [Google My Business](#) or clicking the link in your confirmation email.

- **If your request is approved**, you'll be notified by email and will be able to manage the Business Profile in [Google My Business](#).
- **If your request is denied**, you'll be notified by email, and you can still [suggest an edit](#) to the profile. Also, you might be able to appeal the denied request.
- **If you don't hear back**, you might have the option to claim the profile yourself. Sign in to [Google My Business](#), and look for a "Claim" or "Verify" button on your dashboard/menu.
    ○ If you don't see an option to claim the profile, that means you're not able to transfer the profile.

Was all that too difficult and confusing? Here's a [video](#) you can watch to understand the process.

Now that you've claimed your GMB listing. You can begin updating and changing information on it.

Now you need to focus on the menu on the left. Keeping information accurate and up-to-date helps Google and your business. Google will notice activity and keep you on the radar for those looking for services your business provides.

For right now, let's focus on getting your business description and hours in sync with the current conditions.

You're logged in to GMB, so look at the sidebar menu to the left.
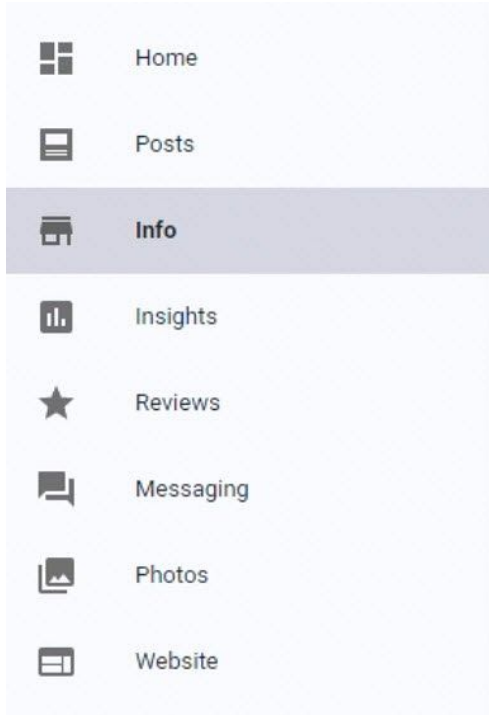
These options are more or less the same for every listing. Click Info to take a look at some of the basic information around your business. This will show the website, phone number, business description, address, hours, and more.

Make sure all of this is up-to-date. You can add a special message that reflects your COVID-19 strategy to your description here.

Make your edits and after each attribute you edit, click **Apply**.

After you submit your edits, the status next to the information you edited will change to "Under review."

To remove a section, click Remove ✕ next to that section.
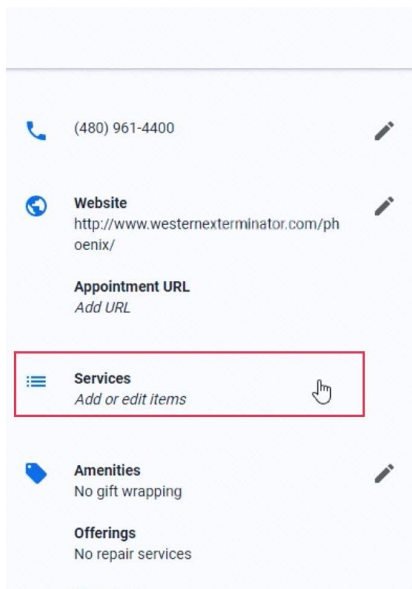
Keep in mind:

- Removing information from our active servers could take up to 60 days. It also may stay in our backup systems longer.
- You can't remove information that's also publicly available or [from other sources](#).
- You can't edit editorial summaries or keywords from the web that appear next to your business.

Here are some step-by-step instructions on how to change the various fields in this section.

Category

Google gives you the option to choose categories that best match your business. All locations of a business must share a *Primary* category.

Try to be as specific as possible when choosing a category. Make sure it is representative of your main business. If you enter several categories, the category entered in the first field will be your primary category.

You can choose up to 9 more categories. If you have trouble choosing a category for your business, choose one that's general. Keep in mind:

- These are not keywords or to attributes of your business.
- Try to choose categories that are different than other nearby or related businesses, such as a business that's located inside your shop's physical location.

Here's what this looks like. Take a look at the right way to select a category.

Here's another video to watch.

This is also the section where you can add, for now, if your location is temporarily closed. Click on Info in the left sidebar menu, and then to the right look for the section marked "Close this business on Google." Click on the drop down arrow on the right if you don't see all of the options.

Close this business on Google

You can mark this business as temporarily or permanently closed. You can also remove this business from your account.

> Mark as temporarily closed

> Mark as permanently closed

> Remove listing

This will show up on everyone's main Google search whenever they look for your business. If you have multiple profiles, select the profile you want to change then follow steps 2 and 3 to mark your businesses as temporarily closed. More information [here](#).

If you're a business operating under restricted hours, as dictated by pandemic circumstances, you can manage your hours accordingly.

To set these special hours, click on Info in the left sidebar menu.

- Then click **Special hours**. (Note: You'll only find this section if you've already provided regular hours.)

It will look something like this:

When you click on *Add special hours*, a new pop-up window shows up.

- Next to an upcoming holiday, click **Confirm hours**. Or to choose a different date, click **Add new date**.
- Enter the opening and closing times for that day.
  - To mark the location as closed all day, slide the circle to "Closed."
  - If you're open 24 hours, click **Opens at,** and from the drop down menu select **24 hours**.
  - If you enter closing hours past midnight, <u>make sure to set them properly</u>.
- When you've finished entering all of your special hours, click **Apply**. Your special hours will appear to customers on Google only for the designated days.

Please remember to click **Apply**, otherwise the changes will not be sent to Google for review and will not appear on your listing.

Tip: For 2 sets of special hours on the same day, enter them in separate rows. For instance, if your business is open for a period in the morning, closes for lunch, and reopens in the afternoon, enter these special hours in two rows. To add another row of hours, click **Add hours**. See below:

I'm available at 647-201-4553 or mehreen@downtownorillia.ca to answer your questions or to set up a virtual session to help out with your digital needs.