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## Google Clarifies Local Search Ranking Factors



By [Sunburnt Internet Marketing](#), 28 April 2016

Google have recently updated their "Improve your local search ranking" guidelines to include a few new ranking factors. The list of factors they have publicly revealed are:

- Google Local profile completeness
- Location verification
- Accurate opening hours
- Reviews and response rate
- Photo accuracy and appeal
- Distance
- Relevance
- Brand recognition



Their update gives us some insight into the sorts of signals Google looks for in general for its ranking algorithm. Below is a summary of their new recommendations.

### **Google Local profile completeness**

Businesses with complete and accurate information are easier to match with the right searches. Make sure that you've entered all of your business information in Google My Business, so customers know more about what you do, where you are, and when they can visit you. Provide information like your physical address, phone number, and category. Make sure to keep this information updated as your business changes.

### **Location verification**

Verify your business locations to give them the best opportunity to appear for users across Google products, like Maps and Search.

## Accurate opening hours

Entering and updating your opening hours, including special hours for holidays and special events, lets potential customers know when you're available and gives them confidence that when they travel to your location, it will be open.

## Reviews and response rate

Interact with customers by responding to reviews that they leave about your business. Responding to reviews shows that you value your customers and the feedback that they leave about your business. High-quality, positive reviews from your customers will improve your business's visibility and increase the likelihood that a potential customer will visit your location.

## Photo accuracy and appeal

Adding photos to your listings shows people your goods and services, and can help you tell the story of your business. Accurate and appealing pictures may also show potential customers that your business offers what they're searching for.

## Distance

How far is each potential search result from the location term used in a search? If a user doesn't specify a location in their search, Google will calculate distance based on what is known about their location.

## Relevance

Relevance refers to how well a local listing matches what someone is searching for. Adding complete and detailed business information can help Google better understand your business and match your listing to relevant searches.

## Brand recognition

This refers to how well-known a business is. Some places are more prominent in the offline world, and search results try to reflect this in local ranking. For example, famous museums, landmark hotels, or well-known store brands that are familiar to many people are also likely to be prominent in local search results.

Brand prominence is also based on information that Google has about a business from across the web (like link articles, and directories). Google review count and score are factored into local search ranking: *more reviews and positive ratings will probably improve a business's local ranking*. Your position in web results is also a factor, so SEO best practices also apply to local search optimization.

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