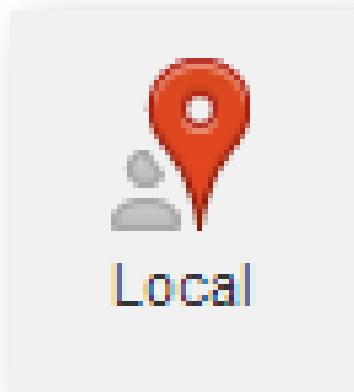


Google+ Places Pages

For small town
businesses



Advance copy released to Small Biz Survival and Tourism Currents readers as a bonus.

Send ideas or suggestions to becky@smallbizsurvival.com

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If yours is a bricks-and-mortar local business, don't ignore Google Places also called Google+ pages. Google's terminology can be confusing, but we'll walk through an actual example to make it clear. We'll use my own liquor store as an example.

Your local business page should already exist, moved over from your old Google listing. Don't create a new Page in Google+. There are two ways you can find it.

Find your page by finding your business in a Google search result.

Go to <http://www.google.com> and search for your business type and your town. To find my store, I enter "liquor store Alva, OK" and search.

The screenshot shows a Google search results page for the query "liquor store alva". At the top, there's a search bar with the query, a microphone icon, and a blue search button. Below the search bar, the results are categorized by "Web", "Images", "Maps", "Shopping", "More", and "Search tools". A message indicates "About 1,440,000 results (0.53 seconds)". The first result is a "Local Result" for "Allen's Retail Liquor Store" with a thumbnail image of the building, the address "916 W Okla Blvd Alva, OK 73717", and the phone number "(580) 327-0290". Below this, there are three other local results: "Alva Liquor stores | Liquor stores in Alva, OK - YP.com", "Allen's Liquor Store Alva, OK, 73717 - YP.com", and "Allen's Liquor Store - Alva, OK - Yelp". Each result includes a thumbnail image, the address, and a brief description. To the right of the search results, there's a map showing the location of Allen's Liquor Store at 916 W Okla Blvd, Alva, OK 73717. The map includes surrounding streets like Maple St, Locust St, and 7th St, along with route markers for US-64 and OK-14. A red pin marks the store's location. Below the map, there's a "See photos" button and a copyright notice "©2013 Google". Further down the page, there's a large box for "Allen's Retail Liquor Store" with a "Directions" button, a "Be the first to review" button, and a summary of the store's details: Address: 916 W Okla Blvd, Alva, OK 73717; Phone: (580) 327-0290; Hours: Closed on Sunday. - See all. There's also a "Feedback" link at the bottom of this box.

See that huge box on the right? That's my store's Google+ Places page. Since I'm signed in to my Google account and I'm the only liquor store in town with a completed Google+ Places page, my store is featured.

If you have more local competitors, you probably won't get a big feature box like my example. You may see a map and list of businesses instead. When I'm not logged in, here's what the local listings look like:

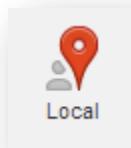
The screenshot shows a Google search results page for the query "liquor store alva, ok". The results are categorized under "Web". The first result is "liquor store near Alva, OK" with two entries: "Allen's Retail Liquor Store" and "Mac's Liquor". Both entries include a "Google+ page" link. A red circle highlights the "Google+ page" link for "Allen's Retail Liquor Store". Below these are other search results, including a profile for "Allen's Retail Liquor Store" and a link to "Alva Liquor stores | Liquor stores in Alva, OK - YP.com". To the right of the search results is a map of Alva, Oklahoma, showing streets like W Okla Blvd, E Okla Blvd, and 5 Oklahoma 14. Two points are marked: Point A at 916 W Okla Blvd and Point B at 5 Oklahoma 14. The map also shows Northwestern Oklahoma State University and route 281.

Do you see how those two listings say “Google+ page”? That’s what you’re looking for! Find your business, and click on the “Google+ page” link under it.

The other way to find your page: Log in to Google Plus first.

Your other option is to log in to Google Plus first, then find your business.

Go to <http://plus.google.com>. You can sign in with any Google account, including your Gmail, YouTube or Android account.



You can find the Local icon in your main left-hand vertical menu. Click on it to go to Local pages.

To find your page, put in your town name, and where it says "Search for restaurants, hotels, and more", put your business type in the search box.

This screenshot shows the Google Local search interface. In the search bar, "liquor" is typed. Below the search bar, the location "Alva, OK, United States" is selected. A dropdown menu shows suggestions: "liquor store" and "Allen's Retail Liquor Store". The "OK" button is visible at the bottom right of the dropdown.

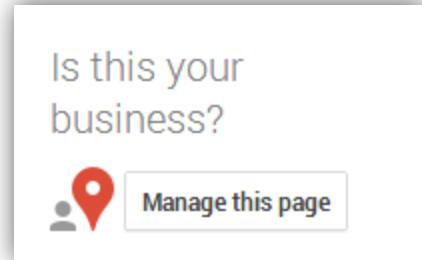
Claiming and Managing your Page

Your main strategy will be uploading photos and updating the business data for your “Place” and including a link URL to your website or other landing page.

To do that, you need to get permission to edit your page. Look for the "Manage This Page" link at the bottom right of your page. If Google recognizes your account as connected to this business, you may get in immediately. (YAY!) If Google isn't sure about your connection, they may send you a postcard in the mail to verify you are connected to this business. That means you'll have to wait until that postcard arrives to get access. (DRAT!)

Note: Even before you have access to manage your page, you can still upload photos, the same way a customer would.

Once you have access to manage your page, you'll arrive at your dashboard.



Google places

Dashboard Offers

Saturday, December 1, 2012 - Saturday, December 29, 2012 Apply

Reach more users with Google AdWords Express. Call 877-546-9956 or Set up AdWords Express ad.

Easily create automatically-managed AdWords ads to promote your business with Google. Learn more

Activity

Impressions Actions

Totals

93 impressions

How many times users saw your business listing as a local search result.

20 actions

How many times users showed interest in your business listing.

1 Clicks for more info on Maps

1 Clicks for driving directions

0 Clicks to your website

Top search queries

Query	Impressions
1 liquor store	18
2 liquor	10
3 liquor stores	6
4 best buy	2
5 liquor	2
6 liqueur	2
7 retail	2
8 stores	2
9 beer store	1

Share an update on your place page View

Share an update about events, specials, and more. Example: "Live music tonight at 7pm!"

Share Facebook Twitter Email

Your business info Edit

100 % complete

916 Okla. Blvd.
Ava, OK 73717
(580) 327-0290
<http://www.allensretail.com>

Description: Fine wines, liquors, craft and imported beers. Click through to our website for wine reviews, reference chart, and more news.

Payment: Check, American Express, Cash, Discover, MasterCard, Visa

Parking available: yes, lot

Special orders: yes, weekly

Email: allenretail@gmail.com

Business Hours:

Monday: 10:00 am - 9:00 pm

Tuesday: 10:00 am - 9:00 pm

Wednesday: 10:00 am - 9:00 pm

Thursday: 10:00 am - 9:00 pm

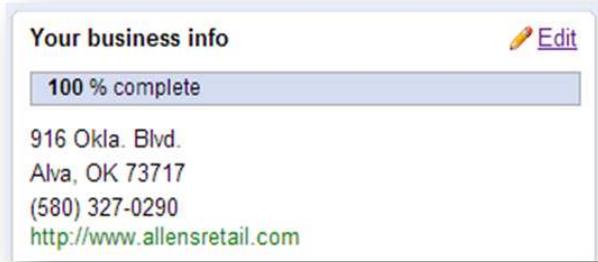
Friday: 10:00 am - 9:00 pm

Saturday: 10:00 am - 9:00 pm

Sunday: Closed

Categories: Retail Stores - Liquor, Retail Stores - Beer, Retail Stores - Wine

On your Dashboard, look for "Your business info" on the right.



Click Edit, and you can start making your listing better.

1. Check the location of your map pin.

Is it accurate? If not, click the link for “Fix incorrect marker location.”

2. Fill in your basic data.

Make sure your basic business data is filled in: hours, payment types, a short description, and any specialties. Add any extra categories your business fits into; you can include up to five. My store is listed under liquor stores, wine stores and beer stores.

3. Add pictures and video.

A picture of your storefront is helpful for people who are driving to find you. Pictures of your interior can give a sense of what you are like before customers ever visit. Have great video? If you post it on YouTube, you can associate up to five videos with your page.

4. Add extra info.

You can include information like brands you carry, whether you deliver, or other special info. We frequently get asked about special orders, so I included that in our listing. Think about what customers ask, and answer that question right here for them.

Getting Reviews

This is a tricky subject. Google says it doesn't want you soliciting customer reviews. One Google employee said it this way in a Google Groups post:

"In our ideas, the "ideal" review is by a customer who writes a review of a place completely by his or her own accord, on mobile [phone] during the experience or at home after. This would mimic the regular flow of the business."

So can you put up a sign or mention reviews to customers? Maybe. Use caution if you do. And don't go asking a whole bunch of people all at once to get yourself a flood of reviews. That's likely to trigger the deletion of those reviews.

Besides, in a small town, just having a completed profile is a big advantage. Don't worry about not having any reviews.

Success!

This is what will vault you to the top of your town's Google Plus Local listings for your business type: A completed Local profile that includes the keywords you want, including your town name.

The screenshot shows a Google+ Local profile for "Allen's Retail Liquor Store". At the top, there is a circular thumbnail of the store's exterior. To the right of the thumbnail, the business name "Allen's Retail Liquor Store" is displayed, along with its category "Liquor Store". Below the name, the address "916 W Okla Blvd Alva, OK 73717", phone number "(580) 327-0290", and website "allensretail.com" are listed. The profile also indicates the store is open "Today 10:00 am – 9:00 pm". A "+1" button is located in the top right corner of the profile card. The background of the profile card features a map showing the location of the store on W. Okla Blvd in Alva, Oklahoma. Below the profile card, there is a section with four small images: a storefront, several bottles of wine, a wine rack, and two large kegs. To the right of these images is a button labeled "Upload public photo". Further down, there is a summary box containing the address, phone number, operating hours, and a brief description: "Fine wines, liquors, craft and imported beers. Click through to our website for wine reviews, reference charts and more news.". To the right of this summary box is a map showing the store's location on W. Okla Blvd. Below the map is a "Directions" button. At the bottom left of the profile card, there is a call-to-action "Be the first to review", and at the bottom right, there is a "Write a review" button. To the right of the review button is a "Visit this place" section, which includes a "Meet here with friends" button and a "Create a Google+ event" button. Finally, at the bottom right of the entire profile card is a question "Is this your business?".