The Small Business SEO Blueprint

How to Get Found on Google Without Paying for Ads

A PRACTICAL, STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS, TRADESPEOPLE, AND LOCAL SHOPS

About This Book

About SEO Kings

SEO Kings is a UK-based digital marketing agency that specialises in helping small businesses and tradespeople get found online. We build websites, optimise Google Business Profiles, and implement SEO strategies that deliver real, measurable results.

We wrote this book because we believe every small business deserves to be visible on Google — without needing a massive marketing budget.

Website: seo-kings.co.uk

Who This Book Is For

This book is for you if:

- You own or run a small business and want more customers from Google

- You're a tradesperson (plumber, decorator, electrician, builder) who relies on local customers

- You run a local shop, salon, restaurant, or service business

- You've been told you "need SEO" but have no idea where to start

- You want to stop paying for ads and start ranking organically

- You're on a tight budget and need to do it yourself

No technical experience required. We've written everything in plain English with step-by-step instructions you can follow today.

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Why SEO Matters for Small Businesses

Every day, thousands of potential customers are searching Google for exactly what you offer. The question is: can they find you?

What SEO Actually Is (In Plain English)

SEO stands for **Search Engine Optimisation**. In simple terms, it's the process of making your website and online presence more visible when people search for your products or services on Google.

Think of it this way: when someone types "plumber near me" or "best decorator in Bath" into Google, SEO is what determines whether your business appears at the top of those results — or gets buried on page five where nobody looks.

SEO isn't about tricking Google. It's about making it easy for Google to understand what your business does, where you are, and why you're the best choice for the searcher.

KEY TAKEAWAY

SEO is simply the practice of helping Google connect the right customers with your business. It's not magic, it's not rocket science — it's a set of practical steps anyone can follow.

Why Google Is Your Best Salesperson

Consider this: when was the last time you needed a service — a locksmith, a restaurant, a plumber — and didn't Google it? Your customers behave exactly the same way.

93%
of all online experiences begin with a search engine

Unlike social media, where you're interrupting people while they scroll, Google catches people at the exact moment they're looking for what you sell. That's the difference between *push marketing* (showing ads to people who aren't interested) and *pull marketing* (appearing when someone actively wants your service).

Google is essentially a free salesperson who works 24/7, never takes a holiday, and only connects you with people who are already interested in what you offer.

Local Search: The Gold Mine for Small Businesses

46%
of all Google searches have local intent

Nearly half of everything searched on Google has a local intent. People are searching for businesses like yours, in your area, right now. Here are some more stats that show why this matters:

- **76%** of people who search for something nearby on their phone visit a business within a day
- **28%** of those searches result in a purchase
- **88%** of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations
- The top 3 results on Google get **75%** of all clicks

If you're not appearing in those local search results, you're essentially invisible to a massive pool of potential customers who are ready to buy.

SEO vs Paid Ads: Why Organic Wins Long-Term

You might be thinking: "Why not just pay for Google Ads?" Paid ads have their place, but here's why SEO is the smarter long-term investment for most small businesses:

FACTOR	SEO (ORGANIC)	GOOGLE ADS (PAID)
Cost	Free clicks once you rank	Pay for every single click
Longevity	Results compound over time	Traffic stops when you stop paying
Trust	People trust organic results more	Many users skip ads
Click-through rate	Higher (organic gets 70%+ of clicks)	Lower (ads get fewer clicks)
Speed	Slower to build (3–6 months)	Immediate traffic
Budget needed	Time investment mainly	£500–£2000+/month for most industries

PRO TIP

The best approach for most small businesses is to focus on SEO as your foundation and only use paid ads for short-term boosts (like a seasonal promotion). Think of SEO as buying a house — it builds equity over time. Paid ads are like renting — you stop paying, you lose the space.

The bottom line: SEO puts your business in front of the right people, at the right time, without costing you a penny per click. For any small business operating on a tight budget, that's a game-changer.

How Google Actually Works

Before you can optimise for Google, you need to understand how it finds, reads, and ranks websites. Don't worry — it's simpler than you think.

The Three-Step Process: Crawl, Index, Rank

Google uses automated programs called "bots" or "spiders" to discover and understand websites. Here's how the process works:

1 **Crawling**

Google's bots constantly browse the internet, following links from page to page, discovering new and updated content. Think of it like a librarian walking through an enormous library, looking at every book on every shelf.

2 **Indexing**

Once Google finds your page, it reads and analyses the content, then stores it in its massive database (the "index"). This is like the librarian cataloguing each book by subject, author, and topic so it can be found later.

3 **Ranking**

When someone searches for something, Google looks through its index and decides which pages are the most relevant and trustworthy. It then displays them in order — the best match at the top. This is like the librarian recommending the best book when you ask a question.

IN SIMPLE TERMS

Google finds your website (crawling), reads and remembers it (indexing), and then decides where to show it when someone searches (ranking). Your job with SEO is to make each of these steps as easy as possible for Google.

What Google Looks For in a Website

Google uses over 200 factors to decide where to rank a website. But don't panic — you don't need to know all 200. The vast majority of your results will come from getting the fundamentals right. Here are the things Google cares about most:

- **Relevance:** Does your page actually answer what the person searched for?
- **Quality content:** Is the information on your page helpful, detailed, and well-written?
- **User experience:** Is your website fast, mobile-friendly, and easy to navigate?
- **Authority:** Do other reputable websites link to yours?
- **Trustworthiness:** Is your business legitimate, with real reviews and accurate information?
- **Freshness:** Is your content up-to-date?

The 3 Pillars of SEO

All of SEO can be broken down into three main areas. Think of them as three legs of a stool — you need all three for it to stand:

1. On-Page SEO (Your Website Content)

This is everything you can control on your own website: the words on your pages, your page titles, headings, images, and how your site is structured. We'll cover this in detail in Chapter 4.

2. Off-Page SEO (Your Reputation)

This is about signals from outside your website that tell Google you're trustworthy. The biggest factor is **backlinks** — other websites linking to yours. Reviews, social mentions, and citations also count. We'll cover this in Chapters 6 and 8.

3. Technical SEO (Your Website's Foundation)

This covers the behind-the-scenes stuff: how fast your site loads, whether it works on mobile, whether Google can properly crawl it, and whether you have the right technical setup. We'll cover this in Chapter 9.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> For most small businesses, 80% of your results will come from getting on-page SEO and your Google Business Profile right. Don't get overwhelmed by the technical stuff — start with the basics and build from there.

How Google Ranks Local Businesses Specifically

Local ranking works slightly differently to general web search. Google considers three additional factors for local results:

- **Relevance:** How well your business profile matches what the person searched for
- **Distance:** How far your business is from the searcher's location
- **Prominence:** How well-known and reputable your business is online (reviews, links, mentions)

You can't control distance, but you absolutely can control relevance and prominence — and that's what the rest of this book will teach you.

Keyword Research Made Simple

Keywords are the bridge between what your customers are searching for and the content on your website. Get this right, and everything else becomes easier.

What Keywords Are and Why They Matter

A **keyword** is simply the word or phrase someone types into Google. When a homeowner types "painter and decorator in Bristol," that entire phrase is a keyword.

Keyword research is the process of finding out exactly what words and phrases your potential customers are using to find businesses like yours. Once you know this, you can make sure your website uses those same words — so Google knows to show your site when people search.

THINK OF IT THIS WAY

If your website talks about "interior decorating services" but your customers are searching for "house painter near me," Google won't connect the two. Keyword research helps you speak your customers' language.

Free Tools to Find Keywords

You don't need expensive software. Here are the best free tools to discover what your customers are searching for:

1. Google Autocomplete

Start typing a search into Google and look at the suggestions that appear. These are real searches that people make frequently. Try typing your service + your area (e.g., "plumber in…") and note every suggestion.

2. Google "People Also Ask"

Search for your main keyword and scroll down to the "People also ask" box. These are real questions people have. Each one is a potential blog post or FAQ answer for your website.

3. Google "Related Searches"

Scroll to the very bottom of any Google search results page. You'll find 8 related searches. These are goldmines for keyword ideas.

4. Ubersuggest (Free Version)

Visit **neilpatel.com/ubersuggest** and enter your main keyword. It will show you search volume (how many people search for it monthly), keyword difficulty (how hard it is to rank), and hundreds of related keyword ideas.

5. AnswerThePublic

Visit **answerthepublic.com** and enter your keyword. It generates a visual map of every question people ask about that topic. Brilliant for finding blog post ideas and FAQ content.

6. Google Search Console

If you already have a website, Google Search Console (free) shows you exactly what keywords people are finding you for. This is real data about your actual visitors — absolute gold.

How to Pick Keywords You Can Actually Rank For

Not all keywords are equal. Here's how to choose the right ones:

Look for the Sweet Spot

- **High relevance:** The keyword must relate directly to what you offer
- **Decent search volume:** Enough people search for it to be worth targeting (even 50–200 searches per month can be valuable locally)
- **Low-to-medium competition:** Giant companies aren't already dominating the results
- **Clear intent:** The searcher clearly wants what you sell

Understand Search Intent

Every search has an intent behind it. Understanding this is crucial:

INTENT TYPE	EXAMPLE SEARCH	WHAT THEY WANT
Informational	"How to fix a dripping tap"	Information / answer
Commercial	"Best plumber in Bath"	Comparing options before buying
Transactional	"Emergency plumber Bath call now"	Ready to hire / buy right now
Navigational	"Checkatrade plumber reviews"	Looking for a specific site

For your main service pages, target **commercial and transactional** keywords. For your blog, target **informational** keywords.

Long-Tail Keywords: Your Secret Advantage

Long-tail keywords are longer, more specific phrases. They have less search volume but much less competition — and the people searching them are usually closer to buying.

SHORT-TAIL (HARD TO RANK)	**LONG-TAIL (EASIER TO RANK)**
"Plumber" — 60,000 searches/month but massive competition from national companies	"Emergency plumber in Bath open Sunday" — 40 searches/month but almost no competition and high buying intent

As a small, local business, long-tail keywords are where you win. Focus on phrases that include:

- Your service + your town/city (e.g., "kitchen painter Bath")

- Your service + "near me" (Google automatically localises these)

- Your service + a specific need (e.g., "wallpaper removal and replastering")

- Questions your customers actually ask (e.g., "how much does it cost to paint a house exterior UK")

PRO TIP

Create a spreadsheet with three columns: Keyword, Monthly Search Volume, and Competition Level. Aim to find at least 20 keywords to start with. Prioritise the ones with clear buying intent and low competition.

Worksheet: Find Your First 20 Keywords

Use the tools above to fill in keywords relevant to your business. Focus on long-tail, local phrases.

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Optimising Your Website (On-Page SEO)

On-page SEO is everything you can control on your own website. Get these fundamentals right and you'll be ahead of 90% of your local competitors.

Title Tags: The Most Important SEO Element

The **title tag** is the clickable headline that appears in Google's search results. It's the single most important on-page SEO element because it tells both Google and searchers exactly what your page is about.

How to Write a Great Title Tag

- Keep it under **60 characters** (Google cuts off anything longer)
- Include your **main keyword** near the beginning
- Include your **location** for local SEO
- Make it compelling enough for people to click
- Include your **business name** at the end (separated by a pipe | or dash)

Meta Descriptions: Your Sales Pitch in Search Results

The **meta description** is the short paragraph of text that appears below your title in Google results. While it doesn't directly affect rankings, it massively affects whether people click on your result.

How to Write a Great Meta Description

- Keep it under **155 characters**
- Include your main keyword (Google bolds it in results)
- Include a clear **call to action** ("Call today," "Get a free quote," "Book online")
- Highlight what makes you different (years of experience, free quotes, 5-star reviews)

EXAMPLE

"Professional painter and decorator in Bath with 25+ years experience. Interior & exterior painting, wallpapering, and decorative finishes. Fully insured. Call for a free quote today."

Header Tags: Organising Your Content

Header tags (H1, H2, H3, etc.) are like the chapter titles and section headings of your page. They help both readers and Google understand the structure of your content.

- **H1:** Use only one per page. This should be your main page title with your primary keyword
- **H2:** Major sections within the page. Use your secondary keywords here
- **H3:** Sub-sections under each H2. Use related keywords and questions

URL Structure

Your page URLs should be short, descriptive, and include your keyword:

BAD URLS

`mysite.co.uk/page?id=47382`

`mysite.co.uk/services/painting/interior/living-rooms-and-bedrooms-painting-service-bath-uk`

GOOD URLS

`mysite.co.uk/interior-painting`

`mysite.co.uk/painter-decorator-bath`

Image Optimisation

Images are often overlooked in SEO, but they're a great opportunity. Here's how to optimise them:

- **File names:** Rename files before uploading. Use `kitchen-painting-bath.jpg` not `IMG_4372.jpg`

- **Alt text:** Write a short description of what the image shows. This helps Google understand the image and improves accessibility. Example: `alt="Freshly painted white kitchen cabinets in Bath home"`

- **File size:** Compress images before uploading. Large images slow your site down. Use free tools like TinyPNG or Squoosh

- **Format:** Use WebP for the best quality-to-file-size ratio. JPEG is fine too

Internal Linking

Internal links are links from one page of your website to another. They help Google understand your site structure and help visitors find related content.

- Link from your homepage to your main service pages

- Link from blog posts to relevant service pages

- Link between related service pages
- Use **descriptive anchor text** (the clickable words). Use "our interior painting service" instead of "click here"

Mobile-Friendliness

Google uses **mobile-first indexing**, meaning it primarily looks at the mobile version of your website for ranking. If your site doesn't work well on phones, you're at a massive disadvantage.

Check your site on Google's free tool: **search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly**

Page Speed

Nobody waits for a slow website. Google knows this and uses page speed as a ranking factor. A few quick wins:

- Compress all images (this is usually the biggest issue)
- Choose a good hosting provider (don't use the cheapest option available)
- Minimise the number of plugins if you use WordPress
- Enable browser caching
- Test your speed at **pagespeed.web.dev**

> **WARNING**
>
> If your website takes more than 3 seconds to load on mobile, over 50% of visitors will leave before they even see your content. Speed matters.

Checklist: On-Page SEO Audit for Your Website

☐ Each page has a unique, keyword-rich title tag (under 60 characters)

☐ Each page has a compelling meta description (under 155 characters)

☐ Each page has exactly one H1 tag containing the primary keyword

☐ Content is organised with H2 and H3 subheadings

☐ URLs are short, descriptive, and contain keywords

☐ All images have descriptive file names

☐ All images have meaningful alt text

☐ All images are compressed (under 200KB ideally)

☐ Internal links connect your key pages

☐ The website is mobile-friendly

☐ Pages load in under 3 seconds

☐ Contact information (name, address, phone) is on every page

☐ There is a clear call to action on every page

☐ Content is at least 300 words on service pages (500+ is better)

Google Business Profile — Your Secret Weapon

Your Google Business Profile is often the very first thing customers see. Optimise it properly and you'll appear in the "Maps pack" — the prime real estate at the top of local search results.

What Is Google Business Profile?

Google Business Profile (formerly Google My Business) is a free listing that appears when people search for your business or businesses like yours. It shows your business name, address, phone number, reviews, photos, opening hours, and more — right there in Google search results and Google Maps.

64%
of consumers have used Google Business Profile to find contact details for a local business

Setting Up Your Profile

1   **Go to business.google.com**

Sign in with your Google account (or create one). Click "Manage now" and follow the prompts to add your business.

2   **Enter Your Business Information**

Add your exact business name (as it appears in real life), your business category, and your service area. If you visit customers (like a plumber or decorator), choose "I deliver goods and services to my customers" and list your service areas.

3   **Verify Your Business**

Google will ask you to verify you're the real owner. This usually happens via a postcard sent to your address (takes 1–2 weeks), but phone or video verification may be available. Don't skip this step — you can't fully optimise until you're verified.

> **IMPORTANT**
>
> Your business name, address, and phone number (known as NAP) must be exactly the same on your Google Business Profile as on your website and everywhere else online. Even small differences like "St" vs "Street" can confuse Google.

Choosing the Right Categories

Your **primary category** is the most important. It should be the main thing you do. For example:

- A painter would choose: **Painter** or **Painting Contractor**
- A plumber would choose: **Plumber**
- A café would choose: **Café** or **Coffee Shop**

You can also add **secondary categories** for other services. A painter might add "Interior Designer" or "Wallpaper Installer." Add all that are relevant, but don't add ones that don't apply.

Writing Your Business Description

You get 750 characters for your business description. Make every word count:

- Open with what you do and where you do it

- Include your main keywords naturally

- Mention your experience, qualifications, and what makes you different

- End with a call to action

Adding Services

Google lets you list your individual services. Add each one with a clear description. For example:

- **Interior Painting** — Full interior painting services including walls, ceilings, woodwork, and trim. Expert colour advice and clean, professional results.

- **Exterior Painting** — Weather-resistant exterior painting for houses, fences, gates, and outbuildings.

- **Wallpaper Hanging** — Professional wallpaper installation including paper-backed, paste-the-wall, and feature walls.

Photos That Convert

Businesses with photos receive **42% more requests for directions** and **35% more clicks to their website**. Here's what to upload:

- **Before-and-after photos** of your work (these are incredibly powerful)

- **Action shots** of you or your team working

- **Finished project photos** with good lighting

- **Your logo** and any team photos

- Aim for **20+ photos** minimum, and add new ones regularly

> **PRO TIP**
>
> Rename your photo files before uploading them. Use descriptive names like `interior-painting-bath-kitchen.jpg` instead of `IMG_4521.jpg`. Google reads file names and this gives you an extra SEO boost.

Getting and Responding to Reviews

Reviews are one of the biggest factors in local SEO. Here's how to build them:

- **Ask every happy customer** for a review. Do it right after completing the job when they're most satisfied
- **Make it easy:** Send them a direct link to your review page (you can generate this from your GBP dashboard)
- **Respond to every review** — positive and negative. Thank happy customers by name and address any concerns professionally
- **Never buy fake reviews.** Google is very good at detecting them and will penalise your listing

Google Posts: Free Marketing

Google Posts let you publish short updates directly on your GBP listing. They appear in search results and are a great way to stay visible. Post about:

- Recent projects you've completed (with photos)
- Special offers or seasonal promotions
- Tips and advice related to your trade
- New services you're offering

Aim to post at least **once a week**. Keep posts under 300 words with a good photo and a call to action.

Checklist: Google Business Profile Optimisation

- ☐ Profile is claimed and verified

- ☐ Business name is exactly correct (matches real-world name)

- ☐ Address and phone number are accurate and match your website

- ☐ Primary category is set correctly

- ☐ Relevant secondary categories are added

- ☐ Business description is written (using keywords naturally)

- ☐ All services are listed with descriptions

- ☐ Opening hours are set (or "by appointment")

- ☐ 20+ photos uploaded with descriptive file names

- ☐ Website URL is added

- ☐ Appointment/quote URL is added (if available)

- ☐ At least 5 reviews with responses

- ☐ First Google Post is published

- ☐ Q&A section has answers to common questions

Local SEO — Dominating Your Area

Local SEO is what puts your business on the map — literally. If you serve customers in a specific area, this chapter is essential.

NAP Consistency: The Foundation of Local SEO

NAP stands for Name, Address, Phone Number. This seems basic, but it's one of the most important factors in local SEO.

Your NAP must be **exactly the same everywhere it appears online**: your website, your Google Business Profile, social media, directories, and anywhere else your business is listed. Even small inconsistencies can hurt your rankings.

INCONSISTENT (BAD)	CONSISTENT (GOOD)
Website: "Smith's Plumbing, 15 High St, Bath"	Website: "Smith's Plumbing, 15 High Street, Bath, BA1 1AA"
GBP: "Smiths Plumbing, 15 High Street, Bath"	GBP: "Smith's Plumbing, 15 High Street, Bath, BA1 1AA"
Yell: "Smith's Plumbing Ltd, 15 High St., Bath, Somerset"	Yell: "Smith's Plumbing, 15 High Street, Bath, BA1 1AA"

Local Citations and Directories

A **citation** is any online mention of your business name, address, and phone number. Getting listed in reputable directories builds trust with Google and helps your local rankings.

Top UK Directories to List On (All Free)

DIRECTORY	WEBSITE	PRIORITY
Google Business Profile	business.google.com	Essential
Bing Places	bingplaces.com	High
Apple Maps	mapsconnect.apple.com	High
Yell	yell.com	High
Thomson Local	thomsonlocal.com	Medium
Yelp	yelp.co.uk	Medium
FreeIndex	freeindex.co.uk	Medium
Checkatrade	checkatrade.com	High (trades)
MyBuilder	mybuilder.com	High (trades)
Bark	bark.com	Medium
Scoot	scoot.co.uk	Low
Facebook Business Page	facebook.com	High

PRO TIP

You don't need to be on every directory — focus on the top 10. Quality over quantity. And always use the exact same NAP format on every one.

Location Pages on Your Website

If you serve multiple areas, create a dedicated page for each one. For example, if you're a decorator serving Bath, Frome, and Trowbridge, create three separate pages:

- `yoursite.co.uk/painter-decorator-bath`
- `yoursite.co.uk/painter-decorator-frome`
- `yoursite.co.uk/painter-decorator-trowbridge`

Each page should have **unique content** about that specific area — don't just copy-paste the same text and change the town name. Mention local landmarks, neighbourhoods, and specific projects you've done there.

Local Link Building Strategies

Links from local websites carry extra weight for local SEO. Here are some effective ways to earn them:

- **Local business associations:** Join your local chamber of commerce or trade association — they usually link to members
- **Sponsorships:** Sponsor a local sports team, charity event, or school fete — you'll usually get a link
- **Local press:** Do something newsworthy and send a press release to local newspapers and blogs
- **Partnerships:** Partner with complementary businesses (a decorator might partner with a kitchen fitter) and link to each other
- **Supplier links:** If your suppliers have a "stockists" or "partners" page, ask to be listed

The Maps Pack: How to Get In

The "Maps pack" (or "Local pack") is the box of 3 businesses with a map that appears at the top of local search results. Getting into this box can transform your business. The key factors are:

1. **An optimised Google Business Profile** (Chapter 5)
2. **Consistent NAP** across the web (this chapter)
3. **Reviews** — both quantity and quality
4. **Proximity** to the searcher (you can't control this)
5. **A well-optimised website** with local keywords (Chapter 4)
6. **Local links and citations**

Focus on what you can control: your profile, your website, your reviews, and your citations. Do these well and you'll be in the strongest possible position.

Content That Ranks

Content is the fuel that drives SEO. Without it, you're asking Google to rank a website that has nothing to say. Here's how to create content that actually gets found.

Why Content Matters for SEO

Every page of content on your website is another chance to rank for a keyword. Your homepage might rank for your main keyword, but what about all the other things people search for?

A blog or resources section lets you target hundreds of keywords that your service pages can't cover. For example:

- Your homepage targets: "painter and decorator Bath"
- A blog post could target: "how to choose paint colours for a small living room"
- Another blog post: "how much does it cost to paint the exterior of a house UK"
- Another: "should I paint or wallpaper my bedroom"

Each of those blog posts attracts visitors who might then become customers. It's like casting a wider net.

Blog Post Ideas for Any Small Business

Not sure what to write about? Use these categories to generate ideas:

1. "How To" Guides

Answer questions your customers frequently ask. These rank well because people literally search them on Google.

- "How to prepare walls for painting"
- "How to choose the right boiler size"
- "How to plan a kitchen renovation"

2. Cost Guides

"How much does it cost to…" is one of the most searched phrases on Google. Create honest, helpful cost guides.

3. Comparison Posts

"Emulsion vs. eggshell paint: which should I use?"

"Combi boiler vs system boiler: which is right for your home?"

4. Local Content

Write about your area: "The Best Victorian Homes in Bath" or "A Tradesperson's Guide to Parking in Frome." Local content attracts local traffic and earns local links.

5. Project Showcases

Document your best projects with before-and-after photos, the challenges you faced, and the results. These are excellent for SEO and for convincing potential customers.

How to Write a Blog Post That Ranks

1 Start With a Keyword

Every blog post should target one specific keyword. Use the research methods from Chapter 3 to find it.

2   ### Check the Competition

Google your keyword and look at the top 3 results. What do they cover? Your post needs to be at least as good — ideally better and more comprehensive.

3   ### Write a Compelling Title

Include your keyword and make it click-worthy. Numbers, "how to," and the current year all help. Example: "How Much Does It Cost to Paint a House Exterior in 2026? (UK Guide)"

4   ### Structure With Headings

Use H2s and H3s to break your content into scannable sections. Include secondary keywords in your headings.

5   ### Write at Least 1,000 Words

For most topics, aim for 1,000–2,000 words. Longer, more comprehensive content tends to rank better — but don't pad it with waffle. Every sentence should add value.

6   ### Add Images

Include relevant photos (especially your own work). Optimise them as described in Chapter 4.

7   ### Internal Link

Link to your relevant service pages and other blog posts. This passes SEO value around your site.

Content Calendar Template

Consistency matters more than volume. Here's a simple plan:

WEEK	CONTENT TYPE	EXAMPLE
Week 1	How-to guide	"How to Prepare Walls for Painting"
Week 2	Cost guide	"How Much Does Exterior Painting Cost in 2026?"
Week 3	Project showcase	"Victorian Home Transformation in Bath"
Week 4	FAQ / tips post	"5 Signs Your Home Needs Repainting"

One post per week is ideal. If that's too much, one every two weeks is still effective. The key is consistency.

The Hub and Spoke Content Model

This is a powerful strategy for building topical authority. Here's how it works:

- **Hub page:** A main service page or comprehensive guide on a broad topic (e.g., "Painting & Decorating Services in Bath")
- **Spoke pages:** Blog posts and sub-pages that cover specific subtopics in detail (e.g., "Interior Painting," "Choosing Paint Colours," "How to Prepare Walls")
- **The links:** All spoke pages link back to the hub, and the hub links out to the spokes

This tells Google that your website is an authority on the entire topic, not just one narrow keyword. It can dramatically boost your rankings across all related searches.

Link Building for Small Businesses

Backlinks are like votes of confidence. When other websites link to yours, Google sees it as a signal that your site is trustworthy and worth ranking.

What Backlinks Are and Why They Matter

A **backlink** is a link from another website to yours. Think of it as a recommendation. If a reputable local newspaper links to your website, Google treats that as a vote of confidence — like a trusted friend telling you about a great business.

Backlinks remain one of the top 3 ranking factors in Google's algorithm. But not all links are equal:

- **High-quality links** (from reputable, relevant websites) are worth far more than hundreds of low-quality links

- **Relevant links** (from websites related to your industry or area) carry more weight

- **Natural links** (earned because your content is genuinely useful) are the most valuable

NEVER DO THIS

Never buy links, use "link farms," or participate in link exchange schemes. Google actively penalises these practices and it can destroy your rankings overnight.

Easy Link Building Tactics for Small Businesses

1. Get Listed in Directories

We covered this in Chapter 6. Every directory listing is a backlink to your website.

2. Ask Suppliers for a Link

If you buy materials or products from specific brands, check if they have a "Find a Tradesperson" or "Our Partners" page. Many manufacturers will link to businesses that use their products.

3. Testimonial Link Building

Write testimonials for businesses you use — your accountant, your material supplier, your web designer. Most businesses will publish your testimonial on their website with a link back to yours. It's a win-win.

4. Local Sponsorship Links

Sponsor a local youth football team, charity run, or community event. You'll usually get a link from the event website or the organisation's sponsors page.

5. Create Link-Worthy Content

Write something genuinely useful that other websites will want to reference:

- A comprehensive cost guide for your industry
- Original data or a local survey (e.g., "We surveyed 100 homeowners in Bath about their renovation plans")
- A free tool or calculator
- An in-depth, definitive guide on a topic

6. Guest Posting

Offer to write a useful article for a relevant blog, local news website, or industry publication. In return, you'll usually get a link back to your website in your author bio.

> **PRO TIP**
>
> Focus on building 2–3 quality links per month rather than chasing hundreds of low-quality ones. One link from your local BBC news website is worth more than 100 links from random blogs.

7. Local Community Links

- Join your local **Chamber of Commerce** — they link to members

- Get listed on your **local council's business directory** (many have them)

- Participate in **local Facebook groups** and community forums — some link out to local businesses

- Offer to **write for your local community newsletter** or parish magazine website

How to Track Your Backlinks

Use these free tools to see who's linking to you:

- **Google Search Console:** Go to Links > External Links to see who links to your site

- **Ubersuggest:** Enter your domain to see your backlink profile

- **Ahrefs Free Backlink Checker:** ahrefs.com/backlink-checker

Technical SEO Basics

Technical SEO makes sure Google can properly find, read, and understand your website. Think of it as the plumbing behind the walls — invisible but essential.

SSL Certificates (HTTPS)

An SSL certificate encrypts the connection between your website and your visitors. You can tell if a site has one by looking for the padlock icon in the browser's address bar, and the URL starting with `https://` instead of `http://` .

Why it matters for SEO: Google has confirmed that HTTPS is a ranking factor. More importantly, Chrome flags non-HTTPS sites as "Not Secure," which scares away visitors.

What to do: Most modern hosting providers include a free SSL certificate. If your site still shows "http," contact your host and ask them to enable SSL. It's usually a one-click setup.

XML Sitemaps

An XML sitemap is a file that lists all the pages on your website. It helps Google find and crawl all your pages, especially new ones.

What to do:

- If you use WordPress, install the Yoast SEO or Rank Math plugin — they create sitemaps automatically

- If you have a custom website, ask your developer to create one

- Submit your sitemap to Google via Search Console (Settings > Sitemaps > enter `sitemap.xml`)

Robots.txt

The `robots.txt` file tells Google which pages it can and can't crawl. In most cases, you want Google to crawl everything — but this file is useful for blocking things like admin pages or duplicate content.

What to do: Check your robots.txt by visiting `yoursite.co.uk/robots.txt` . Make sure it's not accidentally blocking your entire site (this happens more often than you'd think!).

> **WARNING**
>
> If your website was recently redesigned or moved to a new platform, check your robots.txt immediately. Developers sometimes leave a "block all" directive in place from the development phase, preventing Google from indexing your site entirely.

Schema Markup (Structured Data)

Schema markup is special code you add to your website that helps Google understand your content better. It can also earn you "rich results" in search — like star ratings, business hours, or FAQ dropdowns appearing right in Google.

The most useful schema types for small businesses:

- **LocalBusiness:** Tells Google your business name, address, phone, opening hours, and type

- **Service:** Describes individual services you offer

- **Review / AggregateRating:** Displays star ratings in search results

- **FAQ:** Creates expandable FAQ sections directly in search results

- **BreadcrumbList:** Shows your site structure in search results

Core Web Vitals

Core Web Vitals are Google's measurements of how well your website performs for real users. There are three key metrics:

METRIC	WHAT IT MEASURES	TARGET
LCP (Largest Contentful Paint)	How fast the main content loads	Under 2.5 seconds
INP (Interaction to Next Paint)	How quickly the page responds to clicks	Under 200 milliseconds
CLS (Cumulative Layout Shift)	How much the page moves around while loading	Under 0.1

What to do: Test your site at **pagespeed.web.dev** and see your Core Web Vitals scores. If they're red or amber, the tool will tell you exactly what to fix.

Free Tools to Audit Your Site

You don't need expensive software to check your technical SEO. These free tools will identify most issues:

TOOL	WHAT IT DOES	URL
Google Search Console	Shows indexing issues, search performance, and errors	search.google.com/search-console
Google PageSpeed Insights	Tests speed and Core Web Vitals	pagespeed.web.dev
Google Rich Results Test	Checks your schema markup	search.google.com/test/rich-results
Screaming Frog (free up to 500 URLs)	Crawls your site and finds SEO issues	screamingfrog.co.uk
GTmetrix	Detailed speed analysis	gtmetrix.com

Measuring Your Results

*You can't improve what you don't measure. Here's how to track
your SEO progress and know exactly what's working.*

Setting Up Google Search Console

Google Search Console (GSC) is a free tool that shows you how your website appears in Google search. It's the single most important tool for SEO measurement.

1 **Sign Up**

Go to **search.google.com/search-console** and sign in with your Google account.

2 **Add Your Property**

Enter your website URL. Choose the "URL prefix" method for simplicity.

3 **Verify Ownership**

Google will give you several verification methods. The easiest is often adding an HTML tag to your homepage or uploading a verification file.

4 **Submit Your Sitemap**

Go to Sitemaps in the sidebar and enter `sitemap.xml` . This tells Google about all your pages.

Key Reports in Search Console

- **Performance:** Shows your total clicks, impressions, click-through rate, and average position. This is your SEO dashboard

- **Queries:** See the exact keywords people use to find you and your average position for each

- **Pages:** See which pages get the most traffic from search

- **Index Coverage:** Check if Google has any problems crawling or indexing your pages

- **Mobile Usability:** See if Google has found any mobile-friendliness issues

Google Analytics Basics

Google Analytics (GA4) tells you what visitors do after they arrive at your website — how many visitors, where they come from, which pages they view, and how long they stay.

Set it up at **analytics.google.com**. You'll need to add a small tracking code to your website (your web developer or website builder can do this).

Key Metrics to Watch

- **Organic traffic:** How many visitors come from Google (not ads). This should trend upward over time

- **Top landing pages:** Which pages attract the most organic visitors

- **Bounce rate:** The percentage of visitors who leave without interacting. A high bounce rate on a service page suggests the content needs improving

- **Conversions:** Track form submissions, phone calls, or other goals

What Metrics Actually Matter

It's easy to get overwhelmed by data. Focus on these metrics and review them monthly:

METRIC	WHERE TO FIND IT	WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE
Organic clicks	Search Console	Increasing month-over-month
Keyword positions	Search Console	Main keywords in top 10
Total impressions	Search Console	Increasing (more people see you)
Click-through rate	Search Console	Above 3% for most keywords
Organic visitors	Google Analytics	Increasing month-over-month
Enquiries / calls	Your records	Increasing or steady
Google reviews	Google Business Profile	Growing, 4.5+ star average

Monthly SEO Reporting Template

Track your progress each month using this simple framework:

Monthly SEO Report

Month: _____

Organic Clicks (Search Console): _____ (vs last month: _____)

Total Impressions: _____ (vs last month: _____)

Top 5 Keywords by Clicks:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

New Content Published:

_____

_____

New Backlinks Earned:

_____

Google Reviews This Month: _____ (Total: _____)

Enquiries / Calls from Website: _____

Actions for Next Month:

_____

_____

How Long Does SEO Take?

This is the question every business owner asks, and here's the honest answer:

- **1–2 months:** You should see your site appear in Google Search Console data. Some quick wins may appear (especially Google Business Profile improvements)

- **3–6 months:** You should see measurable ranking improvements for your target keywords, especially long-tail and local terms

- **6–12 months:** Significant traffic increases. Your main keywords should be climbing into the top 10

- **12+ months:** Compounding results. Content and links continue to build authority. This is where SEO really pays off

SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

SEO is a marathon, not a sprint. But unlike paid ads (where traffic stops the moment you stop paying), SEO results compound over time. The work you do today continues paying dividends for months and years to come.

Common SEO Mistakes to Avoid

Avoid these pitfalls and you'll save yourself months of frustration. Every mistake listed here is one we've seen small businesses make — often without realising it.

1. Keyword Stuffing

Keyword stuffing means cramming your keyword into your content unnaturally, hoping it will help you rank. It won't. Google is smart enough to detect this and will actually penalise you for it.

KEYWORD STUFFED	**NATURAL**
"We are the best **plumber in Bath**. If you need a **plumber in Bath**, our **Bath plumber** services are the best **plumber Bath** choice for **plumbing in Bath**."	"Looking for a reliable plumber in Bath? With over 20 years of experience, we provide fast, professional plumbing services across the Bath area. From emergency repairs to full bathroom installations, we're here to help."

The fix: Write for humans first, search engines second. Use your keyword naturally 2–3 times on a page, plus natural variations.

2. Buying Links

It can be tempting to buy backlinks from websites promising "100 links for £50." Don't. These links are almost always from spammy, irrelevant websites and Google can detect them. The penalty can be severe — your site could be removed from search results entirely.

The fix: Earn links naturally through the strategies in Chapter 8. It's slower but sustainable and safe.

3. Duplicate Content

Using the same content on multiple pages (or copying content from other websites) confuses Google about which page to rank. For service area pages, this is a common mistake — businesses often create 20 location pages with identical content, just swapping the town name.

The fix: Write unique content for every page. Yes, it's more work, but it's the only approach that works long-term.

4. Ignoring Mobile

If your website doesn't work properly on a phone, you're losing both visitors and rankings. Over 60% of all Google searches now happen on mobile devices, and Google uses mobile-first indexing.

The fix: Test your site on multiple devices. Use Google's mobile-friendly test. Make sure text is readable without zooming, buttons are easy to tap, and pages load quickly on mobile connections.

5. Not Updating Your Google Business Profile

Many businesses set up their GBP once and never touch it again. Google rewards active profiles. If your profile is stale while your competitors are posting weekly updates and adding new photos, they'll outrank you.

The fix: Post at least once a week. Add new photos monthly. Respond to every review within 24 hours. Keep your hours and information up to date.

6. No Clear Call to Action

Getting traffic to your website is only half the battle. If visitors arrive and don't know what to do next, they leave. Every page on your website should have a clear, obvious next step.

The fix: Add clear calls to action: "Get a Free Quote," "Call Us Today," "Book Online." Make your phone number clickable on mobile. Put your contact form above the fold on your contact page.

7. Expecting Instant Results

SEO takes time. If someone promises you page-one rankings in a week, they're either lying or using tactics that will get your site penalised.

The fix: Commit to a consistent 3–6 month effort. Follow the 90-day action plan in Chapter 12. Trust the process — results will come.

8. Neglecting Reviews

Reviews are a ranking factor and a conversion factor. Businesses with more (and better) reviews rank higher and attract more customers. Yet many businesses never ask for reviews.

The fix: Make asking for reviews part of your process. After every successful job, send the customer a direct link to leave a Google review. Make it as easy as possible.

Your 90-Day SEO Action Plan

Here's your step-by-step roadmap. Follow this plan and in 90 days, you'll have a solid SEO foundation that will drive results for years to come.

Weeks 1–2: Foundation

Weeks 1–2

Focus: Get the basics right

☐ Set up Google Search Console and submit your sitemap

☐ Set up Google Analytics (GA4)

☐ Claim and verify your Google Business Profile

☐ Complete your GBP profile: description, categories, services, hours, photos

☐ Check your website has HTTPS (SSL certificate)

☐ Complete the keyword research worksheet (Chapter 3) — find your first 20 keywords

☐ Write down your exact NAP (Name, Address, Phone) to use everywhere

Weeks 3–4: On-Page Optimisation

Focus: Optimise your existing website

- ☐ Optimise title tags for all main pages (homepage, services, contact, about)

- ☐ Write compelling meta descriptions for all main pages

- ☐ Ensure each page has one clear H1 with the primary keyword

- ☐ Add H2 and H3 headings to structure your content

- ☐ Rename and compress all images

- ☐ Add alt text to all images

- ☐ Improve internal linking between your key pages

- ☐ Make sure your NAP is in the footer of every page

- ☐ Add a clear call to action on every page

- ☐ Test your website on mobile and fix any issues

- ☐ Run a PageSpeed test and address major speed issues

Weeks 5–6: Citations & Directories

Weeks 5–6

Focus: Build your online presence

- ☐ List your business on Yell.com
- ☐ List your business on Bing Places
- ☐ List your business on Apple Maps
- ☐ List your business on Thomson Local
- ☐ List your business on FreeIndex
- ☐ List your business on Yelp
- ☐ Create/optimise your Facebook Business Page
- ☐ List on industry-specific directories (Checkatrade, MyBuilder, etc.)
- ☐ Ensure NAP is consistent across all listings
- ☐ Ask 3–5 happy customers for Google reviews

Weeks 7–8: Content Creation

Weeks 7–8

Focus: Start creating content

- ☐ Set up a blog section on your website (if you don't have one)
- ☐ Write your first blog post (target an informational keyword from your research)
- ☐ Write your second blog post (a cost guide or how-to guide)
- ☐ Create location pages for your top 2–3 service areas (if applicable)
- ☐ Publish your first Google Business Profile post
- ☐ Plan your content calendar for the next 3 months

Weeks 9–10: Link Building

Weeks 9–10

Focus: Start building authority

- ☐ Write 2–3 testimonials for businesses you use (with link requests)

- ☐ Contact suppliers about their partner/stockist pages

- ☐ Research one local sponsorship opportunity

- ☐ Identify 3 potential guest posting opportunities

- ☐ Write and publish your third blog post

- ☐ Continue posting weekly on Google Business Profile

- ☐ Follow up on outstanding review requests

Weeks 11–12: Review & Refine

Weeks 11–12

Focus: Measure, learn, and plan ahead

- ☐ Complete your first monthly SEO report (using the template from Chapter 10)

- ☐ Check Search Console for any indexing errors and fix them

- ☐ Review your keyword rankings — what's improving?

- ☐ Identify your best-performing content and create more like it

- ☐ Write and publish your fourth blog post

- ☐ Ask 3 more customers for Google reviews

- ☐ Plan your content and link building for the next quarter

- ☐ Celebrate your progress — you've built a solid SEO foundation!

Quick Wins vs Long-Term Plays

QUICK WINS (IMPACT IN 1–4 WEEKS)	LONG-TERM PLAYS (IMPACT IN 3–12 MONTHS)
Optimise your Google Business Profile	Regular blog content creation
Fix title tags and meta descriptions	Building quality backlinks
Get listed on key directories	Creating comprehensive location pages
Collect Google reviews	Hub and spoke content strategy
Fix site speed issues	Earning local press coverage
Add schema markup	Building topical authority

PRO TIP

Print this action plan out and pin it to your wall. Tick off each item as you complete it. Steady, consistent progress beats a one-time burst of activity every time.

Glossary of SEO Terms

A quick reference for the terms used throughout this book.

Alt Text

A short text description added to an image that helps search engines understand what the image shows. Also used by screen readers for visually impaired users.

Backlink

A link from another website to yours. High-quality backlinks from relevant sites improve your search rankings.

Bounce Rate

The percentage of visitors who leave your website after viewing only one page, without taking any action.

Citation

Any online mention of your business name, address, and phone number (NAP). Common sources include business directories.

Click-Through Rate (CTR)

The percentage of people who see your listing in search results and actually click on it.

Core Web Vitals

Google's set of metrics that measure the real-world user experience of a website: loading speed (LCP), interactivity (INP), and visual stability (CLS).

Crawling

The process by which Google's bots discover and read web pages by following links across the internet.

Domain Authority

A score (usually 1–100) that predicts how well a website will rank. Higher is better. Built through quality content and backlinks.

Google Business Profile (GBP)

A free Google tool that lets businesses manage their online presence across Google, including Search and Maps.

H1 / H2 / H3 (Header Tags)

HTML tags used to structure content on a page. H1 is the main title, H2 is a section heading, H3 is a sub-section heading.

Impressions

The number of times your website appeared in search results, regardless of whether anyone clicked.

Indexing

The process by which Google stores and organises web pages in its database after crawling them.

Internal Link

A link from one page of your website to another page on the same website.

Keyword

A word or phrase that people type into search engines. Also called a "search query."

Long-Tail Keyword

A longer, more specific keyword phrase (e.g., "emergency plumber Bath open Sunday"). Lower volume but higher intent and easier to rank for.

Local Pack (Maps Pack)

The box of 3 business listings with a map that appears at the top of local search results in Google.

Meta Description

The short paragraph of text that appears below your page title in Google search results. Doesn't directly affect ranking but influences click-through rate.

Mobile-First Indexing

Google primarily uses the mobile version of a website for indexing and ranking. If your site isn't mobile-friendly, your rankings suffer.

NAP

Name, Address, Phone number. The core business information that must be consistent everywhere online.

Organic Traffic

Visitors who arrive at your website from unpaid search results (as opposed to paid ads).

Robots.txt

A text file on your website that tells search engine bots which pages they can and cannot crawl.

Schema Markup (Structured Data)

Special code added to your website that helps search engines understand your content and can enable rich results in search.

SERP

Search Engine Results Page — the page you see after typing a query into Google.

Sitemap (XML)

A file that lists all pages on your website, helping search engines find and crawl your content.

SSL Certificate (HTTPS)

Security technology that encrypts data between your website and visitors. Shown as a padlock icon and "https://" in the address bar. A Google ranking factor.

Title Tag

The HTML element that defines the title of a web page. It appears as the clickable headline in Google search results.

Resource List

All the tools, websites, and resources mentioned in this book, in one handy list.

Free SEO Tools

TOOL	PURPOSE	URL
Google Search Console	Track search performance and fix issues	search.google.com/search-console
Google Analytics (GA4)	Website visitor analytics	analytics.google.com
Google Business Profile	Manage your local listing	business.google.com
Google PageSpeed Insights	Test site speed and Core Web Vitals	pagespeed.web.dev
Google Rich Results Test	Test schema markup	search.google.com/test/rich-results
Google Mobile-Friendly Test	Check mobile compatibility	search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly
Ubersuggest	Keyword research and backlink analysis	neilpatel.com/ubersuggest
AnswerThePublic	Find questions people ask	answerthepublic.com
TinyPNG	Image compression	tinypng.com
Squoosh	Image compression and format conversion	squoosh.app

TOOL	PURPOSE	URL
Screaming Frog SEO Spider	Website crawling and auditing (free up to 500 URLs)	screamingfrog.co.uk
GTmetrix	Detailed site speed analysis	gtmetrix.com
Ahrefs Free Backlink Checker	Check who links to your site	ahrefs.com/backlink-checker

UK Business Directories

DIRECTORY	URL	BEST FOR
Google Business Profile	business.google.com	Everyone
Bing Places	bingplaces.com	Everyone
Apple Maps	mapsconnect.apple.com	Everyone
Yell	yell.com	Everyone
Thomson Local	thomsonlocal.com	Everyone
FreeIndex	freeindex.co.uk	Everyone
Yelp UK	yelp.co.uk	Everyone
Checkatrade	checkatrade.com	Tradespeople
MyBuilder	mybuilder.com	Tradespeople
Bark	bark.com	Service businesses
Scoot	scoot.co.uk	Everyone

Recommended Reading

- **Google's SEO Starter Guide:** developers.google.com/search/docs/fundamentals/seo-starter-guide

- **Moz Beginner's Guide to SEO:** moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo
- **Google Search Central Blog:** developers.google.com/search/blog (stay up to date with Google's latest changes)

Need Help With Your SEO?

If you've read this book and want expert help implementing these strategies, SEO Kings is here for you. We specialise in helping small businesses and tradespeople get found on Google.

Our services include:

Website design & development • SEO strategy & implementation • Google Business Profile optimisation • Content creation • Local SEO • Monthly SEO management

Get in touch for a free, no-obligation chat about how we can help your business grow online.

seo-kings.co.uk

Thank you for reading The Small Business SEO Blueprint.

We hope this guide gives you the knowledge and confidence to take control of your online presence. Here's to getting found on Google.

— *The SEO Kings Team*

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