

GBP RECOVERY

↘ HANDBOOK

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PREPARED
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Google Business Profile Suspensions and Appeals

1. What is a Google Business Profile Suspension?

A Google Business Profile (GBP) suspension occurs when a business violates Google's policies or guidelines, resulting in the temporary or permanent removal of the profile from Google Search and Maps. This action is taken to maintain the integrity of the platform and ensure that users receive accurate, trustworthy, and high-quality information.

Key Details About Suspensions

1. Immediate Impact:

- Once suspended, the profile is no longer visible to the public on Google Search, Maps, or other Google services.
- Customers cannot find or interact with the business through its GBP, which can significantly impact visibility, customer engagement, and revenue.

2. Common Reasons for Suspension:

- Violations of Prohibited & Restricted Content Policies , such as posting fake reviews, misleading information, or inappropriate content.
- Misrepresentation of business details, including inaccurate names, addresses, or categories.
- Engagement in manipulative practices, such as creating duplicate profiles or incentivizing reviews.
- Failure to comply with Third-Party Policies , such as managing profiles without proper consent or charging fees for free GBP services.
- Repeated or severe violations of Google's Terms of Service or Local Guides Program Policies .

3. Types of Suspensions:

- Profile Suspension: The specific GBP is removed, but the associated Google account remains active.
- Account Restriction: The entire Google account is restricted, affecting all associated profiles and services.
- Permanent Suspension: In cases of repeated or egregious violations, reinstatement may not be possible.

4. Notification Process:

- Google typically sends an email to the account owner detailing the reason for the suspension and providing links to relevant policies.
- The email may also include instructions on how to appeal the decision, if applicable.

5. Consequences of a Suspension:

- Loss of credibility and trust among potential customers.

- Decreased online visibility, leading to reduced foot traffic, calls, or inquiries.
 - Potential damage to the business's reputation, especially if the suspension is due to unethical practices.
6. Preventive Measures:
- Regularly review and update your GBP to ensure compliance with Google's policies.
 - Avoid engaging in prohibited activities, such as posting fake reviews or misrepresenting your business.
 - Educate yourself and your team about GBP guidelines to prevent accidental violations.
7. Appeal Eligibility:
- Not all suspensions are eligible for appeal. Profiles marked as "Cannot Appeal" are permanently removed due to severe or repeated violations.
 - For eligible suspensions, businesses can submit an appeal by following Google's reinstatement process, which includes providing evidence of compliance.

Why Does Google Suspend Profiles?

Google prioritizes user experience and aims to provide reliable, accurate, and safe information. Suspensions are enforced to:

- Protect users from misleading, harmful, or inappropriate content.
- Prevent unfair competitive practices, such as fake reviews or manipulated rankings.
- Ensure businesses represent themselves accurately and operate ethically.

How to Identify a Suspended Profile

- The profile will no longer appear in Google Search or Maps results.
- Attempts to access the profile via its direct URL will result in an error message or a notification about the suspension.
- The business owner or administrator will receive an email from Google explaining the reason for the suspension.

By understanding what a Google Business Profile suspension entails, businesses can take proactive steps to avoid violations and maintain their online presence. For more details on preventing suspensions, refer to Section 3: How to Avoid a Suspension .

2. Common Reasons for Suspensions

Suspensions can be triggered by:

1. System Detection or Manual Review: Google's systems or operators identify violations.
2. Account Suspension: If the associated Google account is suspended, listings may also be affected.

Specific Causes:

- Listing incorrect business hours (e.g., "Open 24 Hours").
- Adding keywords to the business name.
- Using virtual office addresses without proper verification.
- Creating duplicate listings for the same business.
- Overlapping service areas or sharing contact numbers across profiles.
- Malware on the business website.
- Being an online-only business without physical customer interaction.
- Violations in other Google services (e.g., AdWords).

Prevention Tips:

- Avoid keyword stuffing in the business name.
- Limit frequent edits to the listing.
- Ensure consistency in business details across platforms (e.g., address, hours).
- Avoid using shared virtual office addresses unless verified.

Possible Causes of Google Business Profile Suspensions

Suspensions of Google Business Profiles (GBP) can occur due to violations of Google's policies and guidelines. Below are the primary causes of suspensions, organized into logical categories for clarity:

A. Prohibited or Restricted Content

1. Deceptive Content & Behavior:
 - Contributions must reflect genuine experiences at a location or business. Fake engagement or misleading content is strictly prohibited.
 - Examples:

- Content not based on real experiences or inaccurate representations of a location or product.
 - Incentivized reviews or edits (e.g., discounts, free goods/services).
 - Manipulating ratings by posting from multiple accounts.
 - Using emulators, modified operating systems, or other methods to mimic genuine engagement.
 - Merchants are prohibited from:
 - Soliciting fake or incentivized reviews.
 - Discouraging negative reviews or selectively soliciting positive ones.
 - Posting content on competitors' profiles to undermine their reputation.
2. Impersonation:
- Impersonating individuals, groups, or organizations is not allowed.
 - Examples:
 - Pretending to be an authorized representative of a business or brand.
 - Using alternate names or branding to mislead users.
3. Misinformation:
- False or misleading information that could harm individuals, businesses, or society is prohibited.
 - Examples:
 - Deceptive health, medical, or civic process information.
 - Manipulated images or videos intended to deceive users about newsworthy events.
4. Misrepresentation:
- Misleading descriptions of goods, services, or business operations.
 - Examples:
 - Distorting facts to scam users or influence decision-making.
 - Omitting critical details that could impact user trust or decisions.
 - Posting content that tricks users into revealing confidential information or downloading malicious software.
5. Inappropriate Content:
- Harassment, hate speech, offensive language, or sexually explicit material is prohibited.
 - Examples:
 - Threats of harm against individuals or groups.
 - Content that promotes hate, harassment, or discrimination.
 - Obscene, profane, or gratuitously violent content.
6. Personal Information:
- Distributing personal or confidential information without consent is not allowed.

- Examples:
 - Full names, financial details, or sensitive records.
 - Images or videos of individuals without their permission.
7. Spam and Repetitive Content:
- Low-quality, irrelevant, or repetitive contributions are prohibited.
 - Examples:
 - Random characters, gibberish, or meaningless text.
 - Identical posts from one account or multiple accounts.

B. Inaccurate Business Representation

1. Business Name Violations:
- The business name must accurately reflect the real-world representation of the business.
 - Prohibited:
 - Marketing taglines, store codes, or unnecessary legal terms.
 - Including business hours, phone numbers, or URLs in the name.
 - Acceptable:
 - Clear, concise names like "Shelly's Coffee" instead of "Shelly's Coffee Open 24 Hours."
2. Address and Location Issues:
- Using P.O. boxes, virtual offices, or unstaffed locations is prohibited.
 - Businesses must accurately represent their physical address or service area.
 - Examples:
 - Service-area businesses must hide their address if they don't offer customer pick-up.
 - Delivery-only brands must specify service areas and avoid confusing customers.
3. Category Misuse:
- Categories should describe the core business, not keywords or attributes.
 - Examples:
 - Incorrect: A hotel listing "Swimming Pool" as a category.
 - Correct: A hotel using "Hotel" as its primary category.
4. Duplicate Listings:
- Creating multiple listings for the same business is prohibited.
 - Departments or practitioners within larger businesses must follow specific guidelines.

C. Third-Party Policy Violations

1. Unauthorized Access:
 - Managing or claiming a profile without explicit consent from the business owner is prohibited.
 - Supplanting the identity of Google or its affiliates is strictly forbidden.
2. Misleading Practices:
 - Guaranteeing top rankings in Google Search or Maps.
 - Charging fees for services that are free (e.g., GBP management).
3. Abusive Behavior:
 - Harassing or pressuring businesses into working with the third party.
 - Threatening to delete or sabotage a profile unless payment is made.
4. Lack of Transparency:
 - Failing to inform clients of changes made to their profiles.
 - Hiding fees or providing unclear contractual terms.

D. User-Generated Content and Local Guides

1. Fake Reviews or Ratings:
 - Competitors or malicious users may post fake reviews to harm a business's reputation.
 - Coordinated efforts to manipulate ratings or reviews are prohibited.
2. Malicious Edits:
 - Altering business information to mislead users (e.g., incorrect hours, addresses, or categories).
 - Flagging legitimate profiles for removal without justification.
3. Local Guides Program Violations:
 - Engaging in spammy, abusive, or illegal activities.
 - Using multiple accounts to evade restrictions or subvert policies.

E. Regulated Products and Services

1. Prohibited Content:
 - Promoting regulated products or services (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, firearms, gambling).
 - Links or information facilitating the purchase of restricted goods.
2. Virtual Food Brands:
 - Delivery-only brands must comply with specific guidelines, such as distinct branding and websites.

F. Chain and Department-Specific Violations

1. Inconsistent Naming or Categorization:
 - Variations in names or categories across chain locations without justification.
 - Example: "Home Depot" vs. "The Home Depot."
2. Department Listings:
 - Departments within larger businesses must operate as distinct entities with separate entrances and categories.

G. Illegal or Dangerous Activities

1. Illegal Content:
 - Promoting illegal activities (e.g., human trafficking, drug sales).
 - Violations of copyright or intellectual property rights.
2. Dangerous Content:
 - Instructions for creating or using dangerous items.
 - Encouraging minors to engage in hazardous activities.

H. Other Factors

1. Verification Failures:
 - Profiles not verified or missing required information may be suspended.
2. Rebranding Issues:
 - Significant changes to business identity without justification may result in suspension.
3. Interference with Monitoring:
 - Obstructing audits or monitoring conducted by Google.

3. How to Avoid a Suspension

To ensure your Google Business Profile remains active and compliant with Google's policies, follow these best practices. These guidelines are based on official recommendations and address common causes of suspensions:

A. Keep Information Updated

- Regularly Verify Business Details:
 - Periodically check and update your business name, address, phone number, website, and hours of operation to ensure accuracy.
 - Use official sources (e.g., legal documents, signage, stationery) to confirm consistency between your real-world representation and your profile.
- Monitor Street View and Imagery:
 - Update signage images in Street View or other visual content to reflect current branding.
 - Ensure your business location is accurately represented in Google Maps imagery.
- Seasonal Updates:
 - If your business operates seasonally, clearly indicate this in your business description and mark your profile as "Temporarily Closed" during off-seasons.

B. Avoid Manipulative Practices

- Single Listing Per Business:
 - Do not create multiple listings for the same business, even if it operates in different locations or offers various services. Each physical location should have one profile.
- Prohibited Content:
 - Avoid posting fake reviews, incentivized content, or misleading information.
 - Do not engage in practices that manipulate ratings or rankings, such as using bots or multiple accounts.
- Competitor Sabotage:
 - Refrain from posting negative reviews or making edits to competitors' profiles to undermine their reputation.

C. Follow Naming and Categorization Guidelines

- Accurate Business Name:
 - Use your business's real-world name consistently across all platforms (e.g., storefront, website, stationery).
 - Avoid adding unnecessary details like store codes, legal terms, or promotional phrases (e.g., "Open 24 Hours").
 - Example: Use "Shelly's Coffee" instead of "Shelly's Coffee Open 24 Hours."
- Appropriate Categories:

- Choose categories that accurately represent your core business and avoid using keywords or irrelevant descriptors.
- Example: A coffee shop should use "Coffee Shop" instead of "Swimming Pool" or "Auto Repair."

D. Ensure Compliance with Third-Party Policies

- **Transparent Third-Party Management:**
 - If working with third-party agencies, ensure they comply with Google's Third-Party Policies.
 - Obtain explicit consent before claiming or managing profiles on behalf of clients.
- **Avoid Misleading Claims:**
 - Do not guarantee top rankings in Google Search or Maps.
 - Avoid charging fees for services that are free (e.g., GBP management).
- **Respect Ownership Rights:**
 - Always transfer ownership back to the business owner after managing their profile.
 - Do not retain administrative access to a profile after the client has terminated the relationship.

E. Maintain High-Quality Contributions

- **Genuine User-Generated Content:**
 - Encourage customers to post honest reviews and contributions based on real experiences.
 - Avoid soliciting fake or incentivized reviews.
- **Monitor and Respond to Reviews:**
 - Regularly monitor reviews and respond professionally to both positive and negative feedback.
 - Report inappropriate or fake reviews to Google for removal.
- **Avoid Spammy Behavior:**
 - Do not post repetitive or irrelevant content.
 - Avoid using promotional language, excessive keywords, or unrelated hashtags in your business description.

F. Adhere to Legal and Ethical Standards

- Avoid Prohibited Content:
 - Do not post content that violates Google’s [Prohibited & Restricted Content Policies](#), including hate speech, harassment, or explicit material.
- Respect Privacy:
 - Do not distribute personal or confidential information without consent.
 - Avoid posting images or videos of individuals without their permission.
- Comply with Local Regulations:
 - Ensure your business complies with local laws regarding regulated products or services (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, gambling).

G. Monitor and Address Potential Issues

- Regular Audits:
 - Periodically review your profile for compliance with Google’s policies.
 - Address any flagged issues promptly to prevent suspension.
- Report Violations:
 - If you identify suspicious activity or policy violations (e.g., fake reviews, malicious edits), report them to Google immediately.
- Stay Informed:
 - Keep up-to-date with changes to Google’s policies by reviewing the [Google Business Profile Help Center](#).

H. Educate Yourself and Your Team

- Understand GBP Policies:
 - Familiarize yourself with Google’s guidelines for representing your business, prohibited content, and third-party policies.
- Train Staff and Partners:
 - Ensure anyone managing your profile (e.g., employees, agencies) understands and adheres to Google’s rules.
- Use Official Resources:
 - Refer to Google’s official documentation, such as the [Overview of Google Business Profile Policies](#).

By following these steps, you can significantly reduce the risk of suspension and maintain a strong, trustworthy presence on Google Business Profile.

4. The Appeal Process

If your Google Business Profile has been suspended, you can appeal the decision to restore your profile. Below is an overview of the steps involved in the appeal process:

1. Identify the Violation:
 - Review the suspension email from Google to understand the specific policy violation.
 - Click the provided link to access detailed guidelines about the violated policy.
2. Make Necessary Changes:
 - Update your profile to address the identified violation(s).
 - Ensure compliance with all relevant Google Business Profile policies. For example:
 - Remove prohibited content or fake reviews.
 - Correct inaccurate business information (e.g., name, address, hours, categories).
3. Submit the Appeal:
 - Log into the associated Google account and navigate to the [Appeal Tool](#).
 - Select the suspended profile and follow the instructions to submit your appeal.
 - For multi-location businesses, ensure you select the correct profile requiring resolution.
4. Provide Supporting Evidence:
 - Upload required documents to demonstrate compliance. For a detailed list of required documents, see Section 5 (Required Documents for Reinstatement) .
 - Clearly explain how you've addressed the violation(s). For guidance on filling out the evidence form, see Section 6 (Filling Out the Evidence Form)
5. Monitor the Status:
 - Check the status of your appeal using the [Appeal Tool](#) .
 - Appeals are typically reviewed within 3–7 business days , but delays may occur depending on the volume of submissions.
6. Additional Considerations:
 - If your appeal is denied, you may request a second review by providing additional evidence. See Section 8 (Can I Appeal Every Suspension?) for more details.
 - For account-level restrictions, resolve the issue through the [My Accounts page](#) before appealing individual profiles. See Section 9 (Appealing Account Restrictions) for guidance.

5. Required Documents for Reinstatement

To successfully reinstate a suspended Google Business Profile (GBP), you must provide specific documentation to prove compliance with Google's policies. Below is a comprehensive list of required documents:

1. Official Business Registration:
 - Proof that your business is legally registered in your country or region.
 - Examples: Articles of incorporation, business registration certificates, or equivalent documents.
2. Business License:
 - A valid license issued by the local government authorizing your business to operate.
 - Ensure the license matches the name and address listed in your GBP.
3. Tax Certificate:
 - Documentation proving your business is compliant with tax obligations.
 - Examples: VAT registration, sales tax permits, or other relevant tax documents.
4. Utility Bill:
 - A recent utility bill (electricity, water, internet, etc.) that matches the business name and address listed in your profile.
 - Ensure the document is current (within the last 3 months) and clearly legible.
5. Certificates of Insurance (if applicable):
 - For businesses requiring insurance (e.g., healthcare providers, contractors), include proof of valid coverage.
 - Ensure the certificate includes the business name and address.
6. Additional Supporting Documents (if applicable):
 - Photos of your storefront or signage to verify your physical location.
 - Lease agreements or property ownership documents if your business operates from a rented or owned space.
 - Any correspondence with Google regarding the suspension for context.

6. Filling Out the Evidence Form

When submitting evidence for reinstatement, follow these steps to ensure your appeal is complete and persuasive:

1. Pre-filled Fields:
 - The appeal form will auto-populate fields such as your email, business information, and GBP ID.
 - Verify that all pre-filled information is accurate before proceeding.
2. File Upload:
 - Combine multiple documents into a single zip file if necessary.

- Ensure files are clear, legible, and labeled appropriately (e.g., “Business_License.pdf,” “Utility_Bill.pdf”).
3. Explain Compliance:
 - Clearly state how you’ve addressed the violation(s) identified in the suspension email.
 - Provide specific examples of changes made to your profile or business practices.
 - Example: “I removed prohibited content from my profile description and updated the business name to match my storefront signage.”
 4. Stay Concise:
 - Use up to 1,000 characters to make a factual, persuasive case.
 - Focus on providing clear, actionable evidence rather than emotional appeals.
 - Avoid unnecessary details or unrelated information.
 5. Deadline:
 - Submit the appeal within 60 minutes to avoid losing progress.
 - If additional time is needed, prepare your documents in advance and upload them quickly during the submission process.

7. Reinstatement Timeline

The timeline for reinstating a suspended profile depends on the complexity of the case and the volume of appeals being processed. Below is an overview of the general process:

1. General Timeline:
 - Most appeals are reviewed within 3–7 business days .
 - During peak periods, delays may occur due to the high volume of submissions.
2. Exceptions:
 - Complex cases requiring additional verification may take longer to resolve.
 - Appeals involving severe violations (e.g., repeated policy breaches) may require escalated reviews.
3. Follow-Up:
 - Use the [Appeal Tool](#) to check the status of your appeal.
 - If no response is received within the expected timeframe, contact Google Support for clarification.

8. Can I Appeal Every Suspension?

Not all suspensions are eligible for appeal. Below are key considerations:

1. Eligibility Criteria:
 - Suspensions marked as “Cannot Appeal” are final and cannot be overturned.
 - These typically result from repeated or severe violations, such as:
 - Multiple fake reviews or misleading content.
 - Impersonation or fraudulent activity.
 - Persistent non-compliance with GBP policies.
2. Final Actions:
 - If your profile is permanently suspended, you may need to create a new profile after addressing the underlying issues.
 - Ensure the new profile complies with all GBP policies to avoid further suspensions.
3. Requesting Clarification:
 - If you believe the suspension was a mistake, submit a request for clarification through the [Google Business Profile Help Center](#).

9. Appealing Account Restrictions

If your Google account has been restricted due to policy violations, follow these steps to resolve the issue:

1. Submit an Appeal via My Accounts:
 - Visit the [My Accounts page](#) to initiate the appeal process.
 - Provide detailed explanations and supporting documents to demonstrate compliance.
2. Address Underlying Issues:
 - Identify and resolve the root cause of the restriction (e.g., spammy behavior, impersonation).
 - Ensure all associated profiles and accounts comply with Google’s policies.
3. Reinstate the Business Profile:
 - Once the account restriction is lifted, submit a separate appeal for the suspended Business Profile.
 - Use the [Appeal Tool](#) to reinstate the profile.
4. Monitor Account Status:
 - Regularly check the status of your account and profiles to ensure compliance.
 - Address any flagged issues promptly to prevent future restrictions.

Links and Resources

1. Prohibited & Restricted Content

- [Google's Prohibited & Restricted Content Policies](#)

2. Guidelines for Representing Your Business on Google

- [Overview of Google Business Profile Policies](#)
- [Guidelines for Representing Your Business on Google](#)

3. Third-Party Policies for Google Business Profiles

- [Third-Party Policies for Google Business Profile](#)

4. Local Guides Program Terms and Conditions

- [Local Guides Program Terms and Conditions](#)
- [Local Guides Connect Content Policy](#)

5. Solving Issues with Suspended or Disabled Profiles

- [Resolve Issues with Suspended or Disabled Profiles](#)

6. Appeal Process for Suspended Profiles

- [Appeal Tool for Google Business Profile](#)
- [Submit an Appeal via My Accounts Page](#)

7. Required Documents for Reinstatement

- [Google Business Profile Help Center](#)

8. Timeline for Reinstatement

- [Google Business Profile Support](#)

9. Appealing Account Restrictions

- [Resolve Account Restrictions via My Accounts](#)
- [Google Business Profile Appeals Workflow](#)

Additional Resources

- [Copyright Procedures for Reporting Infringements](#)
- [Report Abuse or Inappropriate Content](#)
- [Google Maps Platform Terms of Service](#)
- [Google Privacy Policy](#)