Local SEO Authority Checklist

19 signals that determine whether Google ranks your local business — or ignores it.

How to use this checklist: Run each item against a specific page on your website. Check it off only if you're confident it's fully satisfied — not partially. Most local business pages fail 5–8 of these. Each failure is a ranking opportunity waiting to be fixed.

SECTION 1 — STRUCTURE & WORD ORDER

Google reads your page like a fast-skimming human — it weights the first words it sees most heavily. These signals tell Google what your page is about before it reads a single paragraph.

☐ **Primary keyword leads your H1 headline**

The H1 is the large title at the top of the page. If you're a plumber in Denver, it should start with something like "Plumber in Denver" — not "Welcome to Our Company." Google reads left to right and weights the first words of your headline most.

☐ **City or region appears in the H1 or opening sentence**

Google associates your page with a geographic market. If your location isn't in the headline or first sentence, Google may not know which city you're targeting — and will rank you for none of them.

☐ **First paragraph gets straight to the point — no warm-up**

Many pages open with generic lines like "For over 20 years, we've served our community..." Google sees this as filler. The first paragraph should immediately tell the reader what the page is about, who it serves, and where — no preamble.

☐ **Browser tab title (the page title tag) leads with your keyword**

The title tag is the blue clickable text in Google search results. "Denver Roof Repair | Acme Roofing" outperforms "Acme Roofing | Denver Roof Repair" because Google weights words that appear earlier in the title.

☐ **Subheadings describe real topics, not marketing language**

Subheadings like "Why Choose Us" or "Our Commitment to Excellence" tell Google nothing. Subheadings like "How Long Does a Roof Replacement Take in Colorado?" signal genuine expertise and match the questions real customers are searching for.

SECTION 2 — CONTENT DEPTH

Google rewards pages that fully answer the questions behind a search — not just pages that mention the right words. Depth signals tell Google that your page deserves to be the best result, not just a result.

☐ **Page covers every major subtopic competitors cover**

Before writing any page, search your main keyword and read the top 3–5 results. Whatever topics those pages cover, yours should cover too — at minimum. If your competitors discuss pricing, process, timeline, and materials, and your page skips most of that, Google sees their pages as more complete.

☐ **Page covers at least 2–3 subtopics competitors DON'T cover**

This is what creates an information advantage. If you can answer questions that nobody else is answering — local permit requirements, neighborhood-specific challenges, material choices unique to your climate — your page becomes more valuable than the competition's.

☐ **FAQ section with 5+ real customer questions**

FAQs aren't just helpful for readers — they directly match the "People Also Ask" questions that appear in Google search results. Write questions the way customers actually ask them ("How much does it cost to replace a furnace in Denver?") not the way marketers write them.

☐ **At least one section contains firsthand experience or real data**

Google's quality guidelines specifically reward Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness (E-E-A-T). A paragraph describing what you personally observed on a job, a stat from your own customer history, or a specific recommendation based on your trade knowledge is something AI-generated content and copycats cannot replicate.

☐ **Technical details, materials, or process steps are included**

Generic pages say "We install HVAC systems." Expert pages describe the equipment brands they use, the steps in the process, what customers should expect on installation day, and what to watch for afterward. Specificity signals expertise.

☐ **Local context goes beyond just dropping a city name**

"We serve Denver" is not local content. Local content is: what makes your market different (altitude, soil type, building codes, weather patterns), what neighborhoods you know well, or what local challenges you regularly solve. Google can tell the difference.

SECTION 3 — CONTENT EFFICIENCY

Google penalizes pages that waste its time. Every sentence that doesn't add new information increases what's called "crawl cost" — and signals that your page is lower quality than it could be.

☐ **No filler opening paragraphs**

Delete any sentence that could appear on any business's website without changing a single word. "We are a trusted, professional team dedicated to serving our customers" is the most common form of SEO dead weight. It tells Google — and your reader — nothing.

☐ **No redundant sentences restating the same point**

Read through each section and ask: does this sentence add information, or does it just rephrase what the previous sentence said? Redundancy inflates word count without increasing value. Google has learned to detect this pattern and discounts pages that rely on it.

☐ **No generic brand boilerplate**

Claims like "industry-leading," "best-in-class," and "second to none" are meaningless without proof. Replace them with specifics: years in business, number of projects completed, certifications held, or a specific result you achieved for a customer.

☐ **Every paragraph adds information not found elsewhere on the page**

If you find yourself covering the same idea in multiple places, consolidate it. Duplicate ideas — even when worded differently — are treated as redundancy, not depth. One thorough explanation outperforms three shallow ones.

SECTION 4 — SITE RELATIONSHIP

No page ranks in isolation. Google evaluates how each page fits into your site as a whole — whether your pages support each other, and whether your site has a coherent area of expertise.

☐ **This page doesn't significantly overlap with another page on your site**

If you have two pages both targeting "Denver HVAC repair," they compete with each other in Google's index — a problem called keyword cannibalization. Each page should target a distinct topic or service. When in doubt, consolidate two similar pages into one stronger one.

☐ **This page links to 1–3 closely related pages on your site**

Internal links help Google understand the relationship between your pages and distribute ranking strength across your site. Link to pages that are genuinely related — a service page might link to a process page, a local area page, or a relevant FAQ. Don't link to everything.

☐ **This page is linked to from other relevant pages on your site**

A page with no internal links pointing to it is an orphan — Google finds it harder to discover and treats it as lower priority. After publishing a new page, go back to your existing pages and add a natural link pointing to it wherever it's relevant.

☐ **The topic fits clearly within your site's core subject matter**

A plumbing company publishing a page about kitchen remodeling trends creates topical confusion — Google isn't sure what the site is an authority on. Every page you publish should reinforce what your site is "about." Broad topics outside your core expertise dilute your authority rather than building it.

Scoring Your Page

17–19 checked — Strong local authority. Focus on growing inbound links and reviews.

12–16 checked — Solid foundation with clear gaps. Fix Section 1 & 2 items first — they have the highest ranking impact.

7–11 checked — Significant opportunity. Prioritize Structure and Content Depth before worrying about promotion.

0–6 checked — The page may be actively working against you. A full rewrite is likely more efficient than patching.