KHUMALO TECH SOLUTIONS

Get Found on Google

A basic SEO guide for your website

Overview

This guide covers the essential first steps to get a website found on Google: creating a sitemap, setting up **Google Search Console**, and claiming a **Google Business Profile**. Allow roughly 60 to 90 minutes. Once everything is submitted, Google can take anywhere from a few days to several weeks to start showing your pages, so a quiet first week is normal.

Before you begin

- Your website is live and loads at its public address (for example `https://www.yourdomain.co.za`).
- A Google account you will keep long term. A dedicated business account is better than a personal one, so access is not lost if someone leaves.
- Access to your hosting control panel (cPanel), or to whoever manages your domain.
- Your business details ready: name, address, phone number, website and opening hours, written exactly as you want them to appear.

Step 1: Create your sitemap and robots.txt

A sitemap is a simple file that lists the pages you want search engines to find. A robots.txt file sits alongside it and points crawlers to the sitemap.

Check whether you already have one

Type your website address followed by `/sitemap.xml` into your browser (for example `https://www.yourdomain.co.za/sitemap.xml`). If you see a list of your pages, skip ahead to the next step. If you see an error or a "page not found" message, follow the steps below.

Create sitemap.xml

1. Open a plain text editor (Notepad on Windows, or TextEdit in plain-text mode on a Mac).
2. Paste in the template below, replace `www.yourdomain.co.za` with your own web address, and add one `<url>` block for every page on the site.
3. Save the file as **sitemap.xml**. Make sure it is not saved as sitemap.xml.txt.

4. Log in to your hosting control panel (cPanel), open **File Manager** and go to the **public_html** folder. This is the folder your website lives in.
5. Click **Upload**, select your sitemap.xml file and wait for it to finish.
6. Open your sitemap address in the browser again to confirm that it now displays.

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<urlset xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9">
  <url>
    <loc>https://www.yourdomain.co.za/</loc>
    <lastmod>2026-10-03</lastmod>
  </url>
  <url>
    <loc>https://www.yourdomain.co.za/contact.html</loc>
    <lastmod>2026-10-03</lastmod>
  </url>
</urlset>
```

TIP Use your web address exactly as it loads in the browser, including https:// and whether or not it has www. Mixing versions is a common cause of indexing problems. Only the `<loc>` tag is required; the `<lastmod>` date is optional but helpful.

Create robots.txt

Repeat the same process with a new text file named **robots.txt** containing the lines below, and upload it to the same public_html folder.

```
User-agent: *
Allow: /

Sitemap: https://www.yourdomain.co.za/sitemap.xml
```

Whenever you add or remove a page, update sitemap.xml and upload the new version over the old one.

Not using cPanel? The upload steps above assume traditional web hosting. If your site was built on a platform such as Wix, Squarespace or Shopify, the sitemap and robots.txt are usually created for you, so open yourdomain.co.za/sitemap.xml first to check. WordPress normally does this through its built-in feature or an SEO plugin, and the address can differ (for example /wp-sitemap.xml). If your site is hosted through a developer tool such as GitHub Pages, Netlify or Vercel, add sitemap.xml and robots.txt to the project files, in the same place as your home page, and publish the update as you normally would. The same applies to the verification file in Step 2: where there is no file upload, use the HTML meta tag or DNS method instead. If you are unsure, ask whoever built your site.

Step 2: Set up Google Search Console

Search Console is Google’s free tool for telling Google your site exists, and for seeing how it is performing in search.

2.1 Add your website

1. Go to **search.google.com/search-console** and sign in with your Google account.
2. Click the property drop-down at the top left, then **Add property**.
3. Choose **URL prefix** and type in your full web address exactly as it loads, for example `https://www.yourdomain.co.za/`. Click **Continue**.

2.2 Verify that you own the site

Google will offer several verification methods. The HTML file method is the simplest on cPanel hosting.

1. Choose **HTML file** and download the verification file Google provides.
2. In cPanel File Manager, upload that file to the **public_html** folder.
3. Open the file's address in your browser to confirm it loads.
4. Return to Search Console and click **Verify**.

> **NOTE** Leave the verification file in place permanently. Deleting it can cause verification to be lost. Alternatives are an HTML meta tag pasted into the `<head>` of your home page, or a DNS TXT record added through cPanel's Zone Editor.

2.3 Submit your sitemap

1. In the left-hand menu, open **Indexing**, then **Sitemaps**.
2. Under **Add a new sitemap**, type `sitemap.xml`.
3. Click **Submit**. The status should change to **Success**. If it says "Couldn't fetch", wait a few minutes and try again.

2.4 Ask Google to index your key pages

1. Paste your home page address into the search bar at the top of Search Console ("Inspect any URL") and press Enter.
2. If the result says the page is not on Google, click **Request indexing**.
3. Repeat for your most important pages. Google limits how many requests you can make each day, so stick to the key pages.

2.5 Give your web developer access (optional)

Go to **Settings**, then **Users and permissions**, then **Add user**, and enter their email address with the permission level you are comfortable with.

Step 3: Set up Google Business Profile

A Google Business Profile is what puts your organisation on Google Search and Google Maps, with your address, hours, photos and reviews.

ELIGIBILITY Google only allows profiles for businesses that meet customers in person, either at a physical address or by travelling to them. A one-off or annual event with no staffed location may not qualify, and profiles that break the guidelines can be suspended. If that applies to you, rely on Search Console and consider listing on relevant directories and event listing sites instead.

1. Go to **business.google.com** and sign in with the same Google account.
2. Click **Add your business** and enter the exact business name.
3. Choose a **primary category**. Pick the most specific one that describes what you do. You can add secondary categories later.
4. Add your **location** if customers visit you. If you travel to customers instead, add your **service area** and choose to hide your address.
5. Enter your **phone number** and **website address**.
6. **Verify** the profile. Depending on your business, Google offers a video recording, phone, email or postcard. Postcards can take around a week to arrive.
7. Complete the profile: add a description (up to 750 characters), opening hours, a logo, a cover photo and good-quality photos.
8. Keep it alive: reply to reviews and post updates regularly.

Step 4: Check that it is working

What to check	Where	What to expect
Sitemap	Search Console, Indexing, Sitemaps	Status shows **Success** and the number of discovered pages matches your sitemap.
Indexed pages	Search Console, Indexing, Pages	Pages move into the **Indexed** list over days to weeks.
Quick search	Google search for `site:yourdomain.co.za`	Your pages appear once indexed. No results at first is normal.
Business Profile	Google search for your business name	Your profile appears in search and on Maps after verification.

New websites often take from a few days to several weeks to appear. Requesting indexing speeds up discovery but does not guarantee a page will be listed or where it will rank.

Step 5: Quick wins on the website itself

Submitting your site gets it noticed. These basics help it rank once it has been found.

- **Secure, single address:** make sure your site loads with https:// (look for the padlock in the browser) and that the versions with and without www lead to the same page, rather than two separate copies. Your hosting provider or web developer can set up a free security certificate and a redirect if needed.

- **Page titles:** give every page its own descriptive title of roughly 50 to 60 characters, with the name and location near the front.
- **Meta descriptions:** write a unique summary of about 150 characters for every page. It is the text people see under your link in search results.

  Example for a plumber in Durban. Weak: the title “Home” with no description.
  Better title: Dlamini Plumbing | 24-Hour Emergency Plumber in Durban
  Better description: Licensed Durban plumbers on call 24 hours a day for burst pipes, geyser repairs and blocked drains. Call us for a free quote today.
- **Headings:** use one clear main heading (H1) per page and sub-headings beneath it.
- **Real text, not just images:** put key details such as your name, dates, location and what you offer in written text, since search engines cannot read text baked into pictures.
- **Image descriptions:** add short alt text to every image.
- **Speed and mobile:** compress large images and check the site on a phone, because most visitors will arrive on one.
- **Consistency:** keep your name, address and phone number identical everywhere they appear: website, social media and business listings.
- **Links in:** link to your website from your social media profiles and from partners and sponsors.

Troubleshooting

Problem	What to do
Sitemap says "Couldn’t fetch"	Open the sitemap address in your browser. If it does not load, check the file name and that it sits in public_html. If it does load, wait a few minutes and resubmit.
Verification fails	Confirm the verification file or tag loads in the browser, and that the property address (with or without www) matches your live site. Do not edit the file.
"Crawled, currently not indexed"	Common on new sites. Make sure the page has useful, unique content and is linked from other pages, then give it time.
Page excluded by "noindex"	Look for a `noindex` tag in the page’s `<head>` and remove it.
Business Profile verification problems	Check your details against Google’s guidelines, then use the Business Profile help centre to contact support.

> **NEED A HAND?** Khumalo Tech Solutions can set all of this up for you. Visit khumalotechsolutions.co.za to get in touch.