JP MARKETING

GUIDE + CHECKLIST

How to Set Up & Optimize Your Google Business Profile

A step-by-step guide + checklist for montessori schools

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Why your Google profile matters so much

When someone near Cary, NC searches for Montessori schools, Google shows a map with 3 businesses on top. That's called the **Map Pack**. Most calls go to those 3.

Your **Google Business Profile** (people still call it "GMB") is what shows up there. It's free. And it's often the very first thing a new family sees.

This guide shows you how to set it up the right way, step by step, for Montessori schools. No tech skills needed.

What you'll get:

- A profile that shows up for more searches
- More calls, website clicks, and more tours and enrollments
- Fewer mistakes that can get your profile suspended
- A simple weekly routine to keep it strong

> **Heads up:** Google changes this stuff a lot. In late 2025 Google started removing the old **Questions & Answers** section from profiles and replacing it with an AI "Ask" feature in Maps. The AI reads your profile, your reviews, and your website to answer questions. So keeping everything complete and correct matters more than ever.

Words to know

Word	What it means
Google Business Profile	Your free listing on Google Maps and search. Also called GMB.
Map Pack	The top 3 businesses on the map.
Category	The label that says what kind of business you are.
Attribute	Little tags like 'wheelchair accessible.'
Service area business	A business that goes to its customers.

Word	What it means
Verification	Proving to Google your business is real.
UTM tag	Extra words at the end of a link that help you track where visits came from.

Before you start: gather this stuff

- [ ] Your exact business name (the one on your sign, your license, and your paperwork)
- [ ] Your real address (and whether customers come to you)
- [ ] Your main phone number (a local number is best)
- [ ] Your website link
- [ ] Your hours (and holiday hours)
- [ ] A list of every service you offer
- [ ] 10 to 20 good photos (more on this below)
- [ ] Your logo and a cover photo
- [ ] A Google account that the business owns (not a staff member's personal email)

> **Tip:** Use a Google account the business owns, like admin@yourbusiness.com. If an employee sets it up with their own Gmail and then leaves, you can lose control of your profile.

Step 1: Find or create your profile

1. Go to **google.com/business** and sign in.
2. Search for your business name. It might already exist (Google sometimes makes profiles on its own).
3. If it exists, click **Claim** or **Request access**.
4. If it doesn't exist, click **Add your business**.

If someone else (like an old marketing company) owns it, use the request access button. Google will email them. If they don't answer in about 7 days, you can often claim it yourself.

Step 2: Use your real business name

Use your name **exactly** as it looks on your sign and paperwork. Example: **Little Oaks Montessori**.

Do **not** add extra words like your city or services. Like this:

Bad (can get you suspended)	Good
Little Oaks Montessori - Best Montessori School Cary	Little Oaks Montessori
Little Oaks Montessori / Toddler Program (18 months to 3) / Primary / Children's House (3 to 6)	Little Oaks Montessori

Yes, adding keywords can help for a little while. But competitors report it, and Google can suspend you. It's not worth it.

Step 3: Pick the right categories (this is HUGE)

Your **primary category** is one of the biggest things Google uses to decide when to show you.

Best primary category for most Montessori schools: Montessori School (or Preschool if most kids are under 6).

Good secondary categories to think about (only pick ones that are true for you):

- Preschool
- Private School
- Kindergarten
- Elementary School (if you have lower el)
- Child Care Agency / Day Care Center (only if you offer full-day care that fits)
- Summer Camp (if you run one)

How to double-check: Search Google Maps for "montessori school cary nc". Look at the top 3. Click each one and see what category shows under their name. If they all use the same one, that's a strong clue.

> **Tip:** You can have 1 primary and up to 9 secondary categories. Don't add categories just to add them. Every one should match something you really do.

Step 4: Address or service area

There are two kinds of businesses on Google:

Type	What it means	What you do
Storefront	Families come to your place	Show your address
Service area business	You go to them	Hide your address and list the cities you serve
Both	You have an office AND go out	Show your address AND add service areas

Big rules:

- You need a real address to verify. No P.O. boxes. No UPS Store boxes. No virtual offices.
- Only make a profile for a place where you really work, with real staff during your hours.
- If you have more than one real location, each one gets its own profile.

Step 5: Hours

Put your real hours. Then:

- Add **special hours** for every holiday (Google will remind you)
- Use 'More hours' for things like phone hours, kids' hours, or online hours if they're different
- Never say 24 hours unless a real person answers 24 hours

Wrong hours = angry families = bad reviews.

Step 6: Phone number and website

Phone: Use a local number that a real person answers. If you use call tracking, put the tracking number as the **primary** number and your real number as an **additional** number. That keeps things matching.

Website: Link to your homepage (or the location page if you have more than one location). Add a tracking tag to the end of the link so you can see these visits in Google Analytics:

```
https://yourwebsite.com/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=gbp
```

Booking link: If you have one, add it in the **Appointments** field. Your main goal is to get people to book a school tour, so make it one click.

Step 7: Add every service

Go to **Edit services**. Add each service with a short description (2 to 3 sentences). Here are good ones for Montessori schools:

- Toddler program (18 months to 3)
- Primary / Children's House (3 to 6)
- Kindergarten year
- Lower Elementary (6 to 9)
- Upper Elementary (9 to 12)
- Before and after care
- Summer camp
- Half-day and full-day options
- Parent education nights

Write each description like you're talking to a neighbor. Use the words people search for. Example:

> **Toddler Program (18 months to 3)** - We help families in Cary with toddler program (18 months to 3). [Add one sentence on what makes yours different, like speed, experience, or price.] Book a school tour today.

Step 8: Write your business description

You get 750 characters. Use them. Say who you help, what you do, where you do it, and what to do next. No links, no ALL CAPS, no sales spam.

Example:

> Little Oaks Montessori is a Montessori school in Cary, NC for children 18 months to 12 years. Our trained Montessori guides help kids grow independent, curious, and kind in calm, hands-on classrooms. We offer toddler, primary, kindergarten, and elementary programs with before and after care. Book a tour to see our classrooms in action.

Step 9: Turn on attributes

Attributes are little tags like "wheelchair accessible" or "online appointments." Turn on every one that's true. Good ones for Montessori schools:

- Wheelchair accessible
- Appointment required (for tours)
- Online appointments (tour booking)
- Women-led (if true)
- Gender-neutral restroom (if true)

Step 10: Add great photos

Profiles with lots of real photos get more clicks. Start with **at least 10**, then add a few every week.

Photos to take:

- Front entrance and drop-off line
- Prepared classrooms (low shelves, real materials)
- Outdoor space and gardens
- Kids working with materials (ONLY with signed parent photo consent)

- Teachers (headshots)
- Lunch or snack setup
- Practical life area
- Events (with consent)

Photo tips:

- Use real photos. No stock pictures.
- Bright light, phone held sideways (landscape).
- Logo: square. Cover photo: wide.
- Short videos (under 30 seconds) work great too.
- Add new photos every week. It tells Google you're active.

Step 11: Get verified

Google needs to know you're real. It might ask for:

- **A video:** You film your sign, your office or your work gear, and proof you run the business (like opening the office door with your key). Keep it one take, no cuts.
- **A phone call or text code**
- **An email code**
- **A postcard** (less common now)

> **Tip:** For video verification, film the outside (street sign or building number), then walk in and show your workspace, tools, and something with your business name on it. Plan your video before you hit record.

Step 12: Build a review system

Reviews help you rank AND help people pick you. More reviews, newer reviews, and reviews that mention your services and city all help.

The simple system:

1. Get your review link. In your profile, click **Ask for reviews** and copy the link.

2. Ask at the happiest moment (right after a great visit or job).
3. Send the link by text. Texts get way more reviews than emails.
4. Follow up once, 2 days later, if they didn't leave one.
5. Reply to **every** review within 2 days.

Sample review request text:

> Hi [Parent Name]! We love having [Child] at Little Oaks. If you're happy with our school, would you share a quick Google review? It helps other families find us. [Review Link] Thank you so much!

Rules: Never pay for reviews. Never offer gifts for reviews. Never write fake ones. Never ask only happy people while blocking unhappy ones (this is called "review gating" and Google doesn't allow it).

How to reply to a 5-star review:

> Thank you so much, [First Name]! We're so glad you had a great experience. See you next time! - [Your Name], Little Oaks Montessori

How to reply to a bad review:

> Thank you for telling us. We're sorry this happened. That's not the experience we want for anyone. Please call [owner name] at [phone] so we can make it right.

> **Kids' privacy:** Never name a child in a reply, and never share anything about a child's behavior or progress. Keep replies about the school and the experience.

Step 13: Post every week

Posts show up on your profile and keep it fresh. Post once a week (twice is even better). Ideas: offers, events, tips, team spotlights, and new photos. (See our **30 Google Business Profile Post Examples** guide for Montessori Schools.)

Step 14: Answer questions (the new way)

The old Q&A section is going away. Now Google's AI answers questions using your profile, reviews, and website. So:

- Make a strong FAQ section on your website with real answers
- Keep your services, hours, and attributes complete
- Ask for reviews that mention the details people care about
- Use posts to share important info (like new hours or new services)

Step 15: Keep your profile safe

- Add a backup owner (you + a trusted partner)
- Give staff 'Manager' access, not 'Owner'
- Never share your Google password
- Check your profile weekly for 'suggested edits' from Google or strangers
- Don't change your name, address, or category a lot. Big changes can trigger a new verification.

Special tips for Montessori Schools

Category choice

'Montessori School' is the best primary category if your whole school is Montessori. If you are mostly ages 2-6, test 'Preschool' too. Add the other age levels you serve as secondary categories.

Tour booking

Put your tour booking page in the 'Appointments' link. Tours are your #1 goal, so make it easy.

Photo consent

Only post photos of kids if parents signed a photo release. Many schools take photos from behind or show just hands working with materials. It still looks great.

Ages in services

List each program with its age range and a short line about the day. Parents search 'Montessori for 2 year olds near me'.

Enrollment seasons

Post about open houses and enrollment deadlines in January to March. Add 'Events' posts with dates.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Calling yourself 'Accredited' when you're not (AMS and AMI accreditation have rules)
- Kids' faces in photos with no consent
- No tour link
- Old hours that don't show before/after care
- Ignoring reviews from parents
- Name stuffing like 'Little Oaks Montessori Best Preschool Cary'

Your weekly 15-minute routine

Day	Task	Time
Monday	Add 2 to 3 new photos	3 min
Tuesday	Publish this week's post	5 min
Every day	Send review links to happy families	2 min

Day	Task	Time
Friday	Reply to all new reviews	3 min
Friday	Check for edits and wrong info	2 min

One-page setup checklist

Setup

- ☐ Profile claimed with a business-owned Google account
- ☐ Backup owner added
- ☐ Real business name (no extra keywords)
- ☐ Best primary category picked
- ☐ Secondary categories added (only true ones)
- ☐ Address or service area set the right way
- ☐ Hours + holiday hours correct
- ☐ Local phone number that a real person answers
- ☐ Website link with tracking tag
- ☐ Booking / appointment link added
- ☐ Every service added with a short description
- ☐ 750-character description written
- ☐ All true attributes turned on
- ☐ Logo and cover photo uploaded
- ☐ 10+ real photos uploaded
- ☐ Verified

Ongoing

- ☐ Post every week
- ☐ Add photos every week
- ☐ Ask every happy family for a review
- ☐ Reply to every review
- ☐ Update holiday hours

- [ ] Check for wrong edits every week
- [ ] Keep website FAQs up to date

Common questions

How long until I see results?

Fixes like the right category and more services can help within a few weeks. Reviews and posts build over months.

My profile got suspended. What now?

Don't make a new one. Fix whatever broke the rules (name, address, category), then ask Google to reinstate it with proof like a business license and photos.

Can I have more than one profile?

Only one per real location with staff during business hours.

Want us to do this for you?

JP Marketing helps local businesses show up on Google, Google Maps, and AI search tools like ChatGPT. We build the websites, write the pages, run the ads, and set up the follow-up.

Book a free strategy call at jpmarketing.co. We'll look at your site and your Google profile, and show you the 3 fastest wins for your business.

Rules on Google, Meta, and AI tools change a lot. This guide was last updated November 2026. It is general marketing info, not legal advice.