

5 Google Places

In the last chapter, Google Maps, you learned how one could easily search for local businesses or places using the maps. You could be searching for anything from a local dentist, physicians, carpenters, shops, retailers, and big businesses to organisations, industries, factories, hospitals, hotels or buildings. Have you wondered as to how Google comes to know or gather so much information and data to be able to display such precise results on its maps? The answer is **Google Places**, where it is the users/owners who are submitting all the information.

5.1 About Google Places

Google Places is a free *listing* service wherein businesses and individuals can provide details about themselves. It differs from traditional listing services in that; there is no restriction on space. You can add detailed information on your address, products or services, photos, business hours, coupons, special offers, service areas and many other relevant details. Plus, you can also pinpoint your exact location on Google Maps as Google Places is integrated with it, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

There are millions of people searching Google Maps daily, so a free listing on Google Maps makes it easier for the customers to find your business. Using **Google Places**, you can list any number of businesses, if you run multiple businesses or a chain of shops, from a single account and you can also update your listings whenever and however you like, so that it is reflected in Google Maps.

If you do not have a business you can still use Google Places for finding, rating the places and sharing them with your friends.

Google claims that one out of every five searches conducted are pertaining to location. Add to that, the fact that most people search for businesses on the net. Google, being the leader in search, is the right place to advertise your business. For example if you are a dentist, and the people in your business area are searching the Internet for a dental clinic, wouldn't it be great if your dental clinic is listed right on top of the search results along with all the details?

5.2 Listing Your Business in Google Places

You can access Google Places at <http://www.google.com/places>. The homepage contains two tabs, one for rating and sharing places on Google and the other for listing your business. A screenshot of the page is given below in figure 5.1.

Signing up and creating a listing for your business is easy. One needs to sign in to his Google account in order to list a business. If you do not have a Google account you will be prompted to create one. Google keeps a tab on the listings being created to avoid ambiguity caused by multiple listings of the same business. This is done by using the phone number in conjunction with the country information, which you will be asked to provide as soon as you are signed in.

After you provide the country and phone details, you will be shown a list of businesses, *if information matching your phone number and country already exists with Google*.

It is possible that Google may already be having some information about your business. This might happen if someone has taken the initiative to add location of your business to Google Maps. In that case, you can edit the information related to the business instead of duplicating the entry.

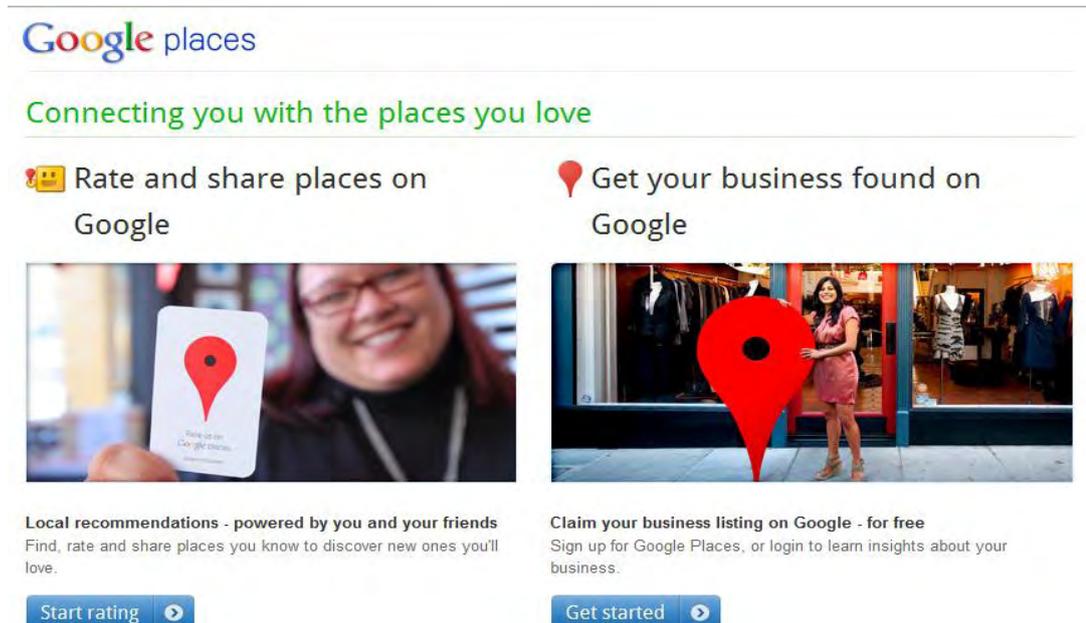


Figure 5.1 Google Places Home Page

If your business does not exist in the list of businesses displayed or if nothing is displayed then you can choose to **Add a Listing**. In this case you will have to fill out the **Basic Information** form wherein you will be required to provide details about your business like *company, address, telephone numbers, website URL*, if you have one, *category* etc.

A screenshot of the form is reproduced below in figure 5.2.

Country: *	United States <input type="button" value="v"/>
Company/Organization: *	<input type="text"/>
Street Address: *	<input type="text"/>
	<input type="text"/>
City/Town: *	<input type="text"/>
State: *	Select state <input type="button" value="v"/>
ZIP: * [?]	<input type="text"/>
Main phone: *	9869172472
	Example: (201) 234-5678 Add more phone numbers
Email address:	<input type="text"/>
	Example: myname@example.com
Website:	<input type="text"/>
	Example: http://www.example.com
	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't have a website.
Description:	<input type="text"/>
	200 characters max, 200 characters left.
Category: *	<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="q"/>
	Which categories (up to 5) best describe your business? Ex: Dentist, Wedding Photographer, Thai Restaurant Add another category

Figure 5.2 Basic Information Form Page

The form extends further than what is shown in figure 5.2 above, and you are asked to provide additional information on *service areas and location, hours of operation, and payment options* i.e. how you charge your customers. Next, you have the option to upload photos and videos related to your business. This could be product photos and videos or simply those showing your store / office. Uploading photos and videos can be a great way of enhancing the impact, of the listing, on your prospective customers.

While you fill out your business address, the Google Map on the right panel will try to show the location on the map of the area. If you feel the marker is in the right place, check the box provided below the map, otherwise you can move the marker to the desired location before checking the box.

Once you have submitted the Basic Information form, you will be asked to specify a verification method for validating your business listing. The screenshot of the verification form is given below in figure 5.3.

How would you like to validate your listing?
For your protection, we need to verify the information you've just given us. This can be done in one of 3 ways:

 **By phone**
We'll call you at this phone number

 **By SMS**
We'll send you an SMS at the following:
Mobile number:
Carrier:

 **By postcard (2-3 weeks)**
We'll send you a postcard in the mail to this address

litagency 1
345, sv road andheri,
Mumbai 400053
Maharashtra
India

If necessary, you may specify another recipient or enter a mailstop/mailbox number below. This information won't appear on Google Maps.

Contact name:

By clicking 'Finish,' you're authorizing Google to create or update your business listing for use in Google Maps or other Google services. You are also affirming that you have the right to create this listing and that you have read and agree to Google's [terms of service](#). There is currently no charge for creating or displaying listings. If this is a new listing or has a new address, you must verify the address via regular mail or telephone before the listing is activated. See next page for instructions.

Figure 5.3 Verification Page

You have three options (**Phone, SMS or Postcard**) to choose from. Irrespective of the method you choose, a **PIN** is given to you, which you have to use to validate your listing. The PIN allocation by phone / SMS is almost immediate and you can enter the PIN on the next page which is the dashboard for Google places. The post method takes about 2-3 weeks. Your listing will be published only after you have verified it. Verified listings appear with the words *Verified by Business Owner* and helps in making the listing look authentic. So make sure you don't forget to verify the listing.

Once you have listed your business successfully and it is reflected on Google Maps, the Google places dashboard gives you the statistics as to the number of page impressions that your listing has had and how many people have shown interest in the listing. The statistics can help you to refine your listing.

Irrespective of the size of your business, Google Places is a great way to be found on the Internet. Managed correctly and consistently, a listing of your businesses with Google Places can get you new customers, re-iterate your existence with the old ones and advertise your business lavishly without spending a dime.