Reyse

Free course for estate and letting agents

The free Review Management course

How to ask every client for a review, reply to every one properly, run every platform that counts and keep it going, lawfully, with the evidence for every step. 19 lessons in 7 modules.

reyse.co.uk/resources/reviews. November 2026 edition. General education, not legal advice.

Contents

Work through the modules in order: each builds on the last. Every lesson starts with three cards (why it matters, how strong the evidence is, and the one thing to do first), then shows you how to check what you have and fix what you find. The website version at reyse.co.uk/resources/reviews adds live demos, a progress tracker, the review audit (which turns your answers into a 90-day plan) and a printable schedule.

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01

Start here

Why reviews matter to agents, how they work, and the free tools to start with.

1.1 Why reviews matter, and the honest limits

1.2 How reviews work: platforms, rules and the words you need

1.3 Your free toolkit and review baseline (set this up first)

Why reviews matter, and the honest limits

A review is a public opinion, written by someone who has used you, for someone who hasn't yet. That second person is the reader who matters. When a past seller writes "they kept us informed every step", the reader is the next seller choosing an agent. When a past tenant writes "my deposit came back on time", the reader is the next tenant deciding whether to trust you with theirs.

Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/why-reviews-matter

In plain English

Two bakeries stand side by side. One has a window full of thank-you notes from neighbours, and when someone once complained about a soggy cake, the baker wrote back kindly and fixed it. The other has no notes at all. You'd probably walk into the first. Reviews are the notes in the window, and replies are the baker writing back.



Morgan King
Founder, Reyse

I'm Morgan King, founder of Reyse. Before Reyse I worked in an estate agency, and I was promoted to branch manager of an underperforming branch with no management experience behind me. When I looked, the branch was hard to find online, and its reviews had been left to look after themselves.

I taught myself how local search and AI search find and describe agencies, and I fixed things one habit at a time, including how we asked for reviews and how we replied. The branch went on to become one of the busiest agencies in the area.

That's why this course is written the way it is. I've done this from the inside, as an agent with a branch to fill, not as an outsider reading about

it. Everything is explained in full, with no jargon standing in for an answer and no hype standing in for proof. Where something is uncertain, I'll say so.

What reviews do for each audience

Who	What they use reviews for	What puts them off
Sellers	Choosing who to invite for a valuation, and checking the agent they're about to sign with	A pattern of "we heard nothing for weeks", or "the price was talked up, then dropped"
Landlords	Choosing a letting or management agent, and judging whether their property will be looked after	Slow repairs, unclear fees, unreturned calls
Tenants	Checking the agent who'll hold their deposit and handle repairs	Unanswered complaints about deposits and repairs, or hostile replies
Buyers	Judging how they'll be treated at viewings and offers	Signs of pressure, offers not passed on, silence after an offer

Reviews do four more jobs inside your agency. They're an early warning: often the first public sign of a problem you hadn't heard about. They're a source of themes for training and fixing the service (lesson 5.2). They shape what Google and AI assistants show about you (lesson 6.1). And they're evidence for your own website (lesson 6.2). Google's help says more reviews and positive ratings can help a business's local ranking, and that positive reviews and helpful replies can help it stand out. It gives no target score, count or weight.

What the UK evidence says

The honest summary: UK consumers read reviews, recent ones matter to many of them, and bad or suspicious-looking reviews put people off. What nobody has shown with UK data is how much a review changes an estate agency instruction.

Source	What it found	How far to trust it
YouGov, 2,119 adults in Great Britain (December	71% check reviews or ratings before buying from an unfamiliar online store. 45% use Google reviews, 61% use sites like Trustpilot. 49% say recency matters.	A proper recent British survey, but about online shops, not choosing

Source	What it found	How far to trust it
2025)	69% are put off by mostly negative reviews, 64% by fake or overly positive ones.	an agent. The nearest recent benchmark.
HomeOwners Alliance, 1,114 people who'd used an agent (2017)	Only 19% of sellers looked for reviews of the agent they used. 73% said recommendations from friends, family and neighbours mattered.	UK and about sellers, but old. A reminder that word of mouth still matters.
Trusted Agent (Kerfuffle), UK agents' review data May 2024 to May 2026 (June 2026)	Agents rated 4.5 or above completed about 2.3 times as many sales and won 77% more instructions.	A vendor study with a private method and an awards business. It shows the two go together, not that reviews caused the sales.
Whito, AI answers in six UK cities (August 2026)	When asked "Who is the best estate agent in [city]?", AI tools quoted ratings and review counts for the agencies they named.	A small snapshot. AI mentions ratings; it doesn't show reviews cause a recommendation.
CMA consumer survey (2015, restated by the CMA in January 2025)	About 54% of UK adults read online reviews, and up to £23 billion a year of spending may be influenced by them.	Official and UK, but old, and estate agency wasn't one of the sectors studied. Don't quote it as a property figure.

You'll often see US figures too, such as BrightLocal's 2026 survey (74% only care about reviews from the last three months). They're useful, but they're not UK and not about agents.

What nobody knows

- No UK study proves that reviews cause more instructions, valuations or lettings. The Trusted Agent figure is the closest, and it's a correlation from a vendor.
- Nobody publishes how much reviews count for ranking. Google says they can help. It doesn't say how much.
- There's no UK evidence that replying to reviews improves rankings. In Whitespark's 2026 survey of local search experts, owner replies ranked 122nd of 187 factors. You reply because customers read replies, not for the algorithm.
- There's no UK evidence on the single best moment to ask, on what share of clients write a review, or on a typical review count for an agency. Lesson 2.1 gives you a way to test your own.

What takes time, and what's outside your control

Kind	Examples	What to do
In your control	How and when you ask, whether every client is asked, how fast you reply and what you say, how you handle complaints, whether your profiles are claimed and accurate	Everything in modules 2 to 6. Start this week.
Takes time	Your total review count, the length of your review history, how long you've been active on each platform	Keep adding steadily. Never abandon or replace a profile you don't have to: on Google, reviews stay with the profile.
Outside your control	How each platform weighs reviews, what competitors do, the occasional unreasonable review	Don't spend energy here. Reply well, report what breaks the rules, and let a long run of good reviews outweigh the odd bad one.

Why steady beats a burst

Say a branch completes 10 sales and lets a month, asks every client, and 2 in 10 leave a review. (The 2 in 10 is invented for the sum: there's no UK benchmark.) That's 2 reviews a month, or 72 over three years, and no competitor can copy that history in a quarter. It's why this course asks you to ask everyone, every time, rather than in bursts.

The six habits this course teaches

1. Ask every client at the right moment, with one easy link and one reminder (module 2).
2. Never incentivise, never gate: the law and the platforms' rules (module 2).
3. Reply to every review, within hours where you can (module 3).
4. Have a real process for negative and fake reviews (module 3).
5. Cover the platforms that count, and watch your numbers (modules 4 and 5).
6. Use your reviews honestly: for rankings, AI answers and your website (module 6).

The percentages on each lesson are our planning weights, not official numbers. Nobody publishes review ranking weights. They answer one question: if you only

have limited time, where should it go first? A legal problem is always a fix-now problem, whatever its weight.

Your 15-minute baseline (do this now)

For each branch, note your review count and rating on Google, Bing, Trustpilot, Facebook and Apple Maps, the date of your newest review, and how many of your last 20 reviews have a reply. Read your last 10 Google reviews for themes. Then ask an AI assistant “Is [agency] in [town] any good?” and see whether its numbers match. Write down your three biggest surprises. Lesson 1.3 turns this into a proper baseline sheet.

Sources

1. How UK shoppers check if an online store is legit before purchasing, YouGov, 2025. yougov.com/en-gb/articles/53836-how-uk-shoppers-check-if-an-online-store-is-legit-before-purchasing
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4. AI estate agent recommendations in six UK cities, Whito, August 2026. whito.co.uk/research/ai-estate-agent-recommendations
5. Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, BrightLocal, 2026. brightlocal.com/research/local-consumer-review-survey
6. Local Search Ranking Factors 2026, Whitespark, 2026. whitespark.ca/local-search-ranking-factors

Lesson 1.2, Module 1: Start here

How reviews work: platforms, rules and the words you need

This lesson is your map: where reviews live, what a review is made of, who's involved, which rules apply, and the handful of words you'll meet throughout the course. Nothing here needs a tool.

Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/how-reviews-work

In plain English

Think of reviews as notes on school noticeboards. Different boards have different rules about who can pin a note and who can pin a reply. A teacher (the platform) takes down rude notes, and the headteacher (the regulator) makes sure nobody pins fake notes or pays pupils to write nice ones.

Where reviews live

Platform	What it is	Can you reply?
Google (Business Profile, Maps, Search)	Stars from 1 to 5 plus optional text, from anyone with a Google Account. Where most local reviews are read.	Yes, once your profile is verified. Google checks replies first: usually within 10 minutes, sometimes up to 30 days.
Bing Places	Bing's local listings. A Microsoft forum answer (2025) says Bing doesn't copy your Google reviews and shows reviews from selected other sites.	Not confirmed
Apple Maps	Apple users can rate places. Guides disagree on whether UK place cards show third-party reviews. Apple Business manages your listing details, not reviews.	Not that we could find
Trustpilot	Any business with a website can be reviewed, and a profile can exist without you ever setting it up.	Yes, and you can flag reviews that break its rules
Facebook	Pages use Recommendations (yes or no, with optional text) rather than stars.	Check your own Page
Property review sites	allAgents, GetAgent, Feefo and others. Some collect their own reviews, some pull in Google's, some run awards.	Varies by site

Platform	What it is	Can you reply?
Rightmove, Zoopla, OnTheMarket	We found no agent review feature on the portals' agent pages.	Not applicable

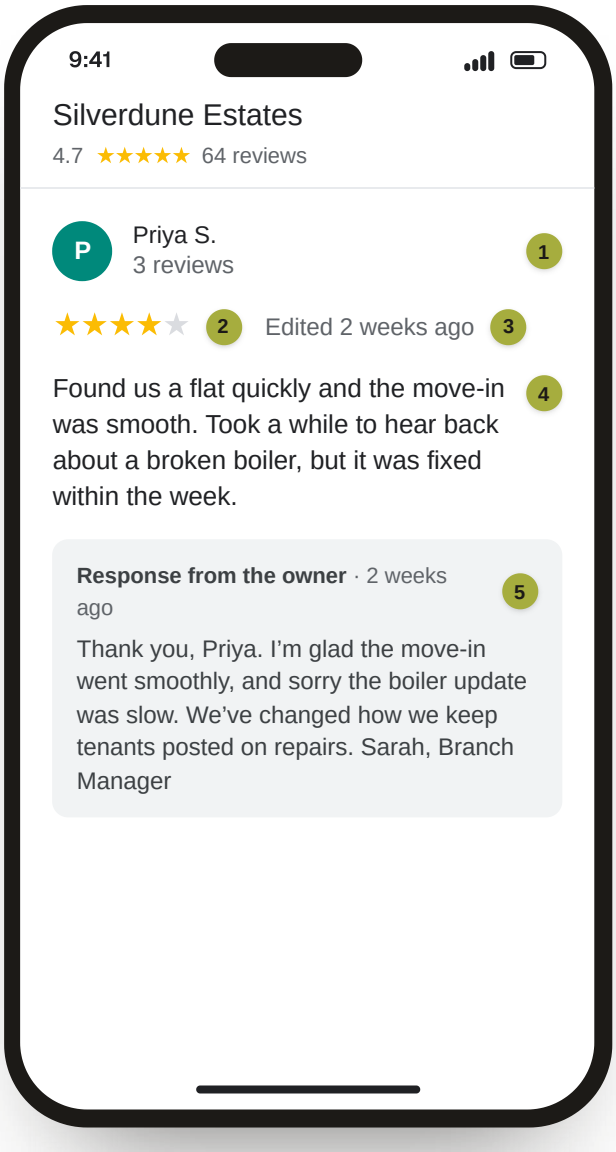
Platforms change features often. Lessons 4.1 and 4.2 cover each one in detail.

What a review is made of

Part	Why it matters	Lesson
Star rating and average	The first thing people see. Google's own advice says a mix of positive and negative looks more trustworthy than a perfect score.	6.1
The written text	Where the themes live (communication, fees, repairs) and where readers decide.	5.2
The count	Shows scale and stability. Google lists review count as part of how prominent a business is.	4.1
Recency	How recent the newest reviews are. 49% of people in YouGov's 2025 survey said recency matters.	5.2
Your reply	Shows readers how you treat people when things go wrong.	3.1

Your average rating, your count and any summary of your reviews are "consumer review information" under UK law. If you show "4.8 from 120 reviews" on your website, it has to be true and fairly presented (lesson 6.2).

Illustration



A review as a reader sees it: (1) who wrote it, (2) the stars, (3) the date, which changes if they edit it, (4) what they said, and (5) your public reply. The rating and count sit at the top. Readers weigh all of it, not just the stars. Made-up agency and review.

Who's involved

Who	Their role
The customer	Writes the review. Your job is to make it easy and fair to speak, not to steer what they say.
The platform	Hosts the review and applies its own rules. Its rules aren't the law, but breaking them can cost you reviews or your profile.
You, the agent	Ask, reply, monitor and report. You're responsible for how you ask, what you publish and what you show on your own site.

Who	Their role
The reader	The next seller, landlord, tenant or buyer, and the AI tool they ask. The person you're really writing for.
The CMA	The Competition and Markets Authority. Enforces consumer law on reviews directly, with fines of up to 10% of global turnover or £300,000, whichever is higher.
Trading Standards	Enforces consumer and estate agency law through the courts.
The ASA	The Advertising Standards Authority. Its code covers testimonials in your marketing.
The Property Ombudsman and Property Redress	The two redress schemes. A negative review can also be a complaint under their rules (lesson 3.2).
The ICO	The UK's data protection regulator: the Information Commission since 30 September 2026 (before that, the Information Commissioner's Office), still at ico.org.uk. Data protection and the rules on emails and texts (lessons 2.4 and 3.1).

The rules, on one page

Rule	What it covers
DMCC Act 2024, Schedule 20, paragraph 13 (in force since 6 April 2025)	Bans fake reviews, reviews that hide an incentive, and publishing reviews or review information in a misleading way. Anyone who publishes reviews must take reasonable steps to keep banned ones out.
CMA fake reviews guidance (CMA208, April 2025)	Explains how to comply. Asking only happy customers counts as cherry-picking. Showing reviews on your own website makes you a publisher.
Google's review policy	No fake reviews, no incentives, no reviews from staff or family, and no asking only for positive reviews. Since April 2026, no asking staff to collect a set number of reviews or reviews that name them.
Trustpilot's business guidelines	Invite everyone the same way. No selecting happy customers, no incentives, no staff or family.
The CAP Code (rules 3.47 to 3.50)	Testimonials in your marketing must be genuine, held on file, used with permission and not misleading.
PECR and UK GDPR	How you may email and text clients, and how you handle their data.
Defamation Act 2013 (England and Wales)	A business is only defamed if a statement causes, or is likely to cause, serious financial loss.
Redress scheme codes	An in-house complaints procedure with set timescales, and client information kept confidential.

Written for England. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland differ on tenancies, redress and defamation, so check your nation's rules. This isn't legal advice.

The words you need

- Gating: asking for feedback in a way that sends unhappy customers to a private form and happy ones to a public review. Against the rules (lesson 2.3).
- Selective asking: only asking the clients you expect to be happy. The same problem by another route. Google calls it “selectively soliciting positive reviews”; the CMA calls it cherry-picking.
- Incentive: anything given in return for a review: a discount, a voucher, a gift, a place in a prize draw. Google and Trustpilot ban them outright.
- Fake review: one that claims to be from a genuine experience but isn’t. Includes staff or family posing as clients, bought reviews and attacks from competitors.
- Response rate: the share of your reviews that have a reply from you (lesson 5.2).
- Recency: how recently your reviews were written. Review velocity: how many new ones arrive each month.
- Theme: a topic that repeats across reviews, such as communication, repairs or fees.
- Negative cluster: a sudden run of bad reviews. Our working rule is two 1 or 2-star reviews in seven days, or the same complaint twice (lesson 5.1).
- Review link: a web address that opens your review box directly.
- Primary Owner: the main account holder of a Google Business Profile. Keep it in the business’s hands (lesson 4.1).

One review, start to finish

Step	What can go wrong	Lesson
1. The experience	A problem nobody noticed becomes the review	5.2
2. The request	Wrong moment, too many steps, only some clients asked, no permission to message	Module 2
3. The click	Broken link, wrong branch, no Google Account	2.2

Step	What can go wrong	Lesson
4. The review	Fake, mistaken or unfair	3.3
5. The platform checks it	Held back or filtered, and you may never know	7.1
6. The alert	Nobody's watching the inbox, or only one person is	5.1
7. Your reply	Slow, defensive, careless with personal data, or nobody owns it	3.1 and 3.2
8. The reader	Old or mixed reviews, or a different rating on every platform	6.1 and 6.2

Sources

1. Prohibited and restricted content, Google Maps user contributed content policy. support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114
2. Fake reviews: guidance for businesses (CMA208), Competition and Markets Authority. gov.uk/government/publications/fake-reviews-cma208
3. Guidelines for businesses, Trustpilot. corporate.trustpilot.com/legal/for-businesses/guidelines-for-businesses
4. Bing Places for Business, Microsoft Bing. bingplaces.com
5. Apple Business, Apple. business.apple.com
6. How UK shoppers check if an online store is legit before purchasing, YouGov, 2025. yougov.com/en-gb/articles/53836-how-uk-shoppers-check-if-an-online-store-is-legit-before-purchasing

Lesson 1.3, Module 1: Start here

Your free toolkit and review baseline (set this up first)

Almost every test in this course uses the same few free tools, so set them up once, now. It takes about 90 minutes and makes every later lesson faster. For Search Console and analytics, see the SEO course's toolkit (lesson 1.3). This lesson adds the review-specific parts.

Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/review-toolkit

In plain English

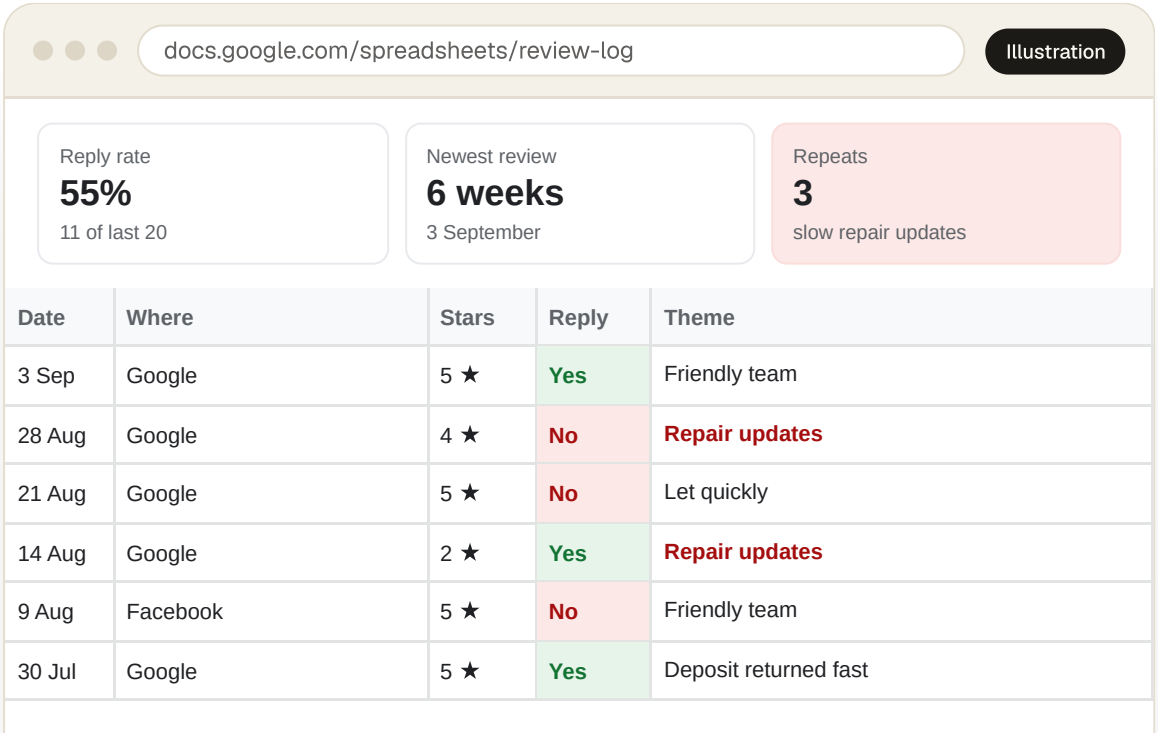
Before a football season, a good coach marks out the pitch, counts the balls and writes down the starting score. This is that: setting up, and writing down where you start, so you can tell later whether you're winning.

The free tools to set up now

1 Your review baseline sheet

Free

Where you stand today, so you can compare later instead of trusting memory. A Google Sheet or Excel file, one row per platform per branch.



Date	Where	Stars	Reply	Theme
3 Sep	Google	5 ★	Yes	Friendly team
28 Aug	Google	4 ★	No	Repair updates
21 Aug	Google	5 ★	No	Let quickly
14 Aug	Google	2 ★	Yes	Repair updates
9 Aug	Facebook	5 ★	No	Friendly team
30 Jul	Google	5 ★	Yes	Deposit returned fast

22 Jul	Google	3 ★	No	Repair updates

+ 13 older reviews

Your baseline sheet: one row per review, whether it has a reply, and its theme. Fifteen minutes now gives you the three numbers every later lesson tries to move. Made-up agency and reviews.

How to set it up +

Open Your review baseline sheet ↗

2 Your Google review link and QR code

Free

A direct route into your review box, for every branch. Each branch has its own profile, so each needs its own link.

How to set it up +

Open Your Google review link and QR code ↗

3 A short link that counts clicks

Free plan

A Google review link lands on Google, so your own analytics never see it. A link shortener counts the clicks and QR scans instead.

How to set it up +

Open A short link that counts clicks ↗

4 A shared reviews inbox, and Google's notifications

Free

So a new review reaches a person the day it's posted, not whenever someone remembers to look.

How to set it up +

Open A shared reviews inbox, and Google's notifications ↗

5 Google Alerts for your name

Free

Emails you when new pages mention your agency. A net for news, forums and blogs. It won't catch reviews inside Google Maps or most review sites.

How to set it up +

Open Google Alerts for your name ↗

6 An AI assistant, for themes and first drafts

Free

Reads a pile of reviews faster than you can and suggests themes, or drafts a reply for you to edit. Free versions are enough.

How to set it up +

Open An AI assistant, for themes and first drafts ↗

Check you control every profile

Find out now, not in a crisis, who can log in. For each platform in your sheet: can you log in? Is the account tied to a company address rather than a former employee's personal one? Is it verified or claimed? On Google, a profile must be verified before you can reply to a single review. Trustpilot creates a profile

automatically when people search for your web address, so you may have one you never set up. If you can't log in somewhere, that's your first problem to fix.

Rules for who owns the logins

- The business owns every profile, not a person. Use a company or role email address, never a negotiator's personal Gmail.
- At least two people have owner or admin access on each platform, and one of them is a director or the owner.
- Never create a new Google profile for a branch that moves or rebrands. Google says reviews stay with the profile, and move with it when you keep the same name.
- Keep logins in a company password manager, not a spreadsheet or a chat, and turn on two-step verification.
- When someone leaves, remove their access the same day and change any shared password.
- Decide who covers the inbox and replies when the usual person is on holiday.

Quick test

Ask an AI assistant: "I am pasting my agency's last 10 Google reviews, with names, addresses and staff names removed. List the three most common themes in praise and in complaints, with one short quote for each. Only use what is in the text." Then check each theme against the reviews yourself.

Paid tools, when you outgrow the free ones

You can do this whole course for free. Paid tools automate requests and monitoring: some property CRMs (Street, for example) send review requests automatically, and tools such as Reviewflowz, Grade.us, Whitespark Reputation Builder, BrightLocal, Feefo and Trustpilot's paid plans add sending, alerts and reports. Check current prices on each tool's own site, and be wary of any provider

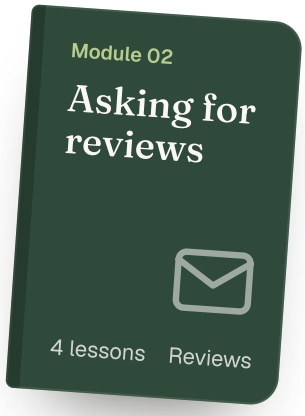
that promises a rating, filters who gets asked, or offers incentives (lesson 7.1 has the questions to ask).

Reading your baseline

1. Which platform has the most reviews, and which will a customer see first? Start there.
2. Is the newest review recent, or has the profile gone quiet?
3. What share of reviews have a reply? If it's well below 100%, you've found your easiest fix.
4. What are the top themes? A repeated complaint is a service problem, not just a reply to write.
5. Can you log in everywhere, and could someone else? If not, fix access first.

Sources

1. Prohibited and restricted content, Google Maps user contributed content policy. support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114
2. Guidelines for businesses, Trustpilot. corporate.trustpilot.com/legal/for-businesses/guidelines-for-businesses



02

Asking for reviews

When and how to ask every client, without breaking the law or the platforms' rules.

2.1 The right moment, sent within 24 hours
2.2 One-click easy, with one reminder
2.3 Never incentivise or gate: UK law and platform rules
2.4 Ask everyone, lawfully: privacy, consent and your team

The right moment, sent within 24 hours

Two habits. Choose the one point in each client's journey when you ask for a review (the trigger), and send the request within 24 hours of it, ideally the same working day.

Priority 9%, How often: Set once, check quarterly, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/right-moment-within-24-hours

Why it matters

Requests sent on a fixed date, or whenever someone remembers, reach people after the goodwill and the detail have faded.

The evidence

Common sense ●●○○○

No UK study has found the best moment or the best delay. Recency mattering to readers is backed by surveys; the same-day target is our recommended practice.

Do this first

Pick one trigger for each client type, and make the request go out the same working day.

In plain English

A waiter who asks "How was it?" while you're mid-bite gets a mumble. One who asks once the plates are cleared and the coffee has arrived gets a real opinion. Ask three weeks later and all you'll remember is "it was fine".

A thank-you note. Written the morning after the party, it's warm and specific. Written a month later, it says "thanks for having us".

Why it matters

Ask before the client has felt the outcome and even a happy client gives a lukewarm answer. Ask too late and the goodwill has gone. The best moment is usually just after a clear win the client can feel. Speed matters too: someone asked the day after completion remembers the specific things that went well and writes a specific review; someone asked three weeks later writes three words.

Buyers: After completion, once they have their keys.

Tenants: Keys handed over, or the end of the first week. That's the part you control. At the end of a tenancy, ask only once the deposit is settled.

Sellers: Completion is the outcome the next seller cares about, so it's a sensible default. Offer accepted feels like a win, but the sale can still fall through.

Landlords: Move-in day for a let-only landlord. For a managed landlord, the first rent arriving, when they see the service working. Ask once, not every quarter.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Common sense

Timing isn't a ranking factor: nothing suggests Google measures when you asked. What it and every reader can see is what good timing produces: longer, more specific reviews, and a steady flow of recent ones. Google's help says more reviews and positive ratings can help local ranking, with no target number. In Whitespark's 2026 survey of local search experts (mostly US and Canada), review recency ranked 11th and a steady flow of reviews rather than bursts 14th, out of 187 factors. Trustpilot says newer reviews count for more in its score.

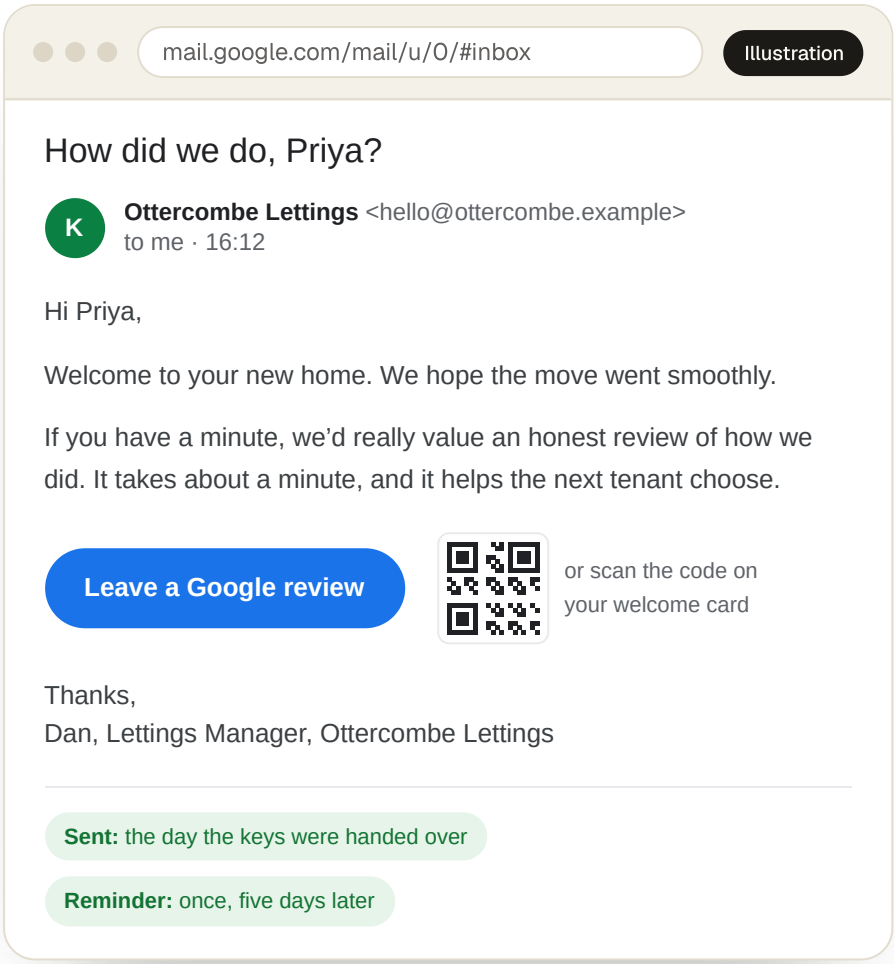
An agent example

Wexcombe and Finch, a two-branch sales agency, sent review requests on the first of each month to everyone who'd completed the month before, so some clients heard six weeks after getting their keys. Replies were few and mostly said "great service". It switched the trigger to the completion date, sent the same working day, and kept a simple tracker. Over the next quarter it saw more reviews and longer ones, but with small numbers it kept testing rather than celebrating.

Test it

1 The moment check

1. List your last 10 reviews. For each, find the file in your CRM and note the client type, the key milestone date and the date the request went out.
2. Ask honestly: was there a clear best moment in that deal, and did the request land there, or somewhere random?



A review request that does the work for the client: sent the day the keys are handed over, one button straight to the review form, and the same QR code as the welcome card. One reminder follows five days later. Made-up agency.

2 The turnaround check

1. Take your last five completions and count the days between completion and the request going out.
2. If any took more than 48 hours, note why: a process gap, or just forgetting.

3 The trigger check

1. Open your CRM or review tool and find what actually sends the request: a status change (completion, move-in) or a fixed date like the first of the month?
2. If you can't find it, that's your answer. Ask your supplier.

4 Test two moments

There’s no UK answer to the best moment, so find your own.

1. For one client type, pick two moments (for example, keys and the end of the first week for tenants).
2. Alternate them by month or by branch, with a different short link for each so clicks can be counted.
3. Record requests sent, reviews received and how detailed they are. Wait for about 30 requests each before comparing. Compare how many people review, not the stars.

5 Ask AI

AI prompt

Here is a table of 10 anonymised rows: client type, days from milestone to request, review received (yes or no), approximate word count. Do not guess beyond the data. What patterns do you see, what are the limits of such a small sample, and what should I test next? Do not suggest asking only some clients.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Write a trigger map

1. One row per client type (seller, landlord, tenant, buyer): the exact event that starts the request, who sends it, and the deadline (same working day).
2. Switch from calendar sending to milestone sending.
3. Not sure of the moment? Ask five recent clients, including one or two who had a bumpy time, when they felt most positive. Don’t ask for a review in the same call.

2 Make it a task, not a memory

1. Add a “request sent” column to your tracker, or a CRM task created by the completion status, and the rule that a file isn’t closed until the request has gone.
2. Use a short, genuine template instead of waiting for the perfect personal message. A request sent today beats a perfect one next week.

3 Automate it

The trigger fires the same day, every time, without anyone remembering.

1. Some property CRMs can send a review email from a status change. Street, for example, lets you choose the milestone and edit the wording.
2. Pick a status that means an outcome (completion, move-in), not a viewing.
3. Ask any supplier two questions: can a status change send the message, and is the send date logged?

4 Know when not to ask

1. Pause during a live dispute, an open complaint, a deposit disagreement or a collapsed sale.
2. Then send the same request once it's settled. Never asking people who complained is selective asking (lesson 2.4).
3. Write the pause rule down so it's applied the same way to everyone.

Then: Check your real turnaround every quarter. Busy months are exactly when the same-day habit quietly slips.

Keep it up

Set the trigger once, and revisit it if your process changes (a new CRM, a new service). Spot-check the turnaround each quarter. **(Set once, check quarterly)**

Go deeper: Why not ask in the middle of a sale?

A 2017 government-commissioned survey of about 2,000 buyers and sellers in England and Wales found sellers least satisfied with being kept informed and with chasing after exchange, and buyers whose purchase was delayed less satisfied than the rest. The figures are old, but they point at the same place: the weeks between offer and completion are when clients feel least looked after. Asking inside that gap catches people mid-worry.

Sources

1. Local Search Ranking Factors 2026, Whitespark, 2026. whitespark.ca/local-search-ranking-factors
2. Tips to improve your local ranking on Google, Google Business Profile Help. support.google.com/business/answer/7091
3. Prohibited and restricted content, Google Maps user contributed content policy. support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114

One-click easy, with one reminder

Send a direct link that opens straight into the review box, not a request to “search for us on Google”. Then send exactly one gentle reminder to anyone who hasn’t reviewed, not a string of nags.

Priority 9%, How often: Set once, test quarterly, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/one-click-link-one-reminder

Why it matters

Every extra step between “I’ll leave a review” and the review box loses people, and most who don’t reply first time simply forgot.

The evidence

Official guidance ●●●●●

Google’s help pages explain the link and QR code. The single reminder at four to five days is practitioner advice; no UK study has measured it.

Do this first

Get a direct review link and QR code for every branch, test it on a phone, and send one reminder four or five days after the request.

In plain English

Ask a friend into your garden. Point at an open gate and they walk in. Say “find the street, then the house, then the gate” and half of them give up. One friendly reminder is fine. Ten and they start avoiding you.

A direct link is giving someone the postcode and house number instead of “we’re somewhere on the High Street”. The reminder is a tap on the shoulder, not a siren.

There’s a live demo of this on the website: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/one-click-link-one-reminder

Why it matters

Someone willing to review is doing you a favour on their own time. Making them search for you, find the right listing and then the review button is three chances to get distracted. A direct link removes all three. And most people who don’t review first time aren’t refusing: they’re busy. One polite reminder catches some of them without annoying anyone. After one, the returns drop and the annoyance climbs.

Buyers: Want to finish in seconds on a phone, and should never feel chased or watched.

Tenants: A QR code on the move-in card catches them at the right moment.

Sellers: Busy moving, and usually well-disposed. A direct link and one reminder respect their time.

Landlords: Often review from a desk. A link in an email they can come back to works well.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Official guidance

A direct link isn't a ranking factor. It raises the share of willing clients who actually finish, and review volume counts: Google says more reviews and positive ratings can help local ranking, and in Whitespark's 2026 expert survey the number of Google reviews with text ranked 9th of 187 factors. Google itself recommends sharing your review link or QR code. Asking only for Google reviews won't create Bing reviews: Bing shows reviews from other sites (lesson 4.2).

An agent example

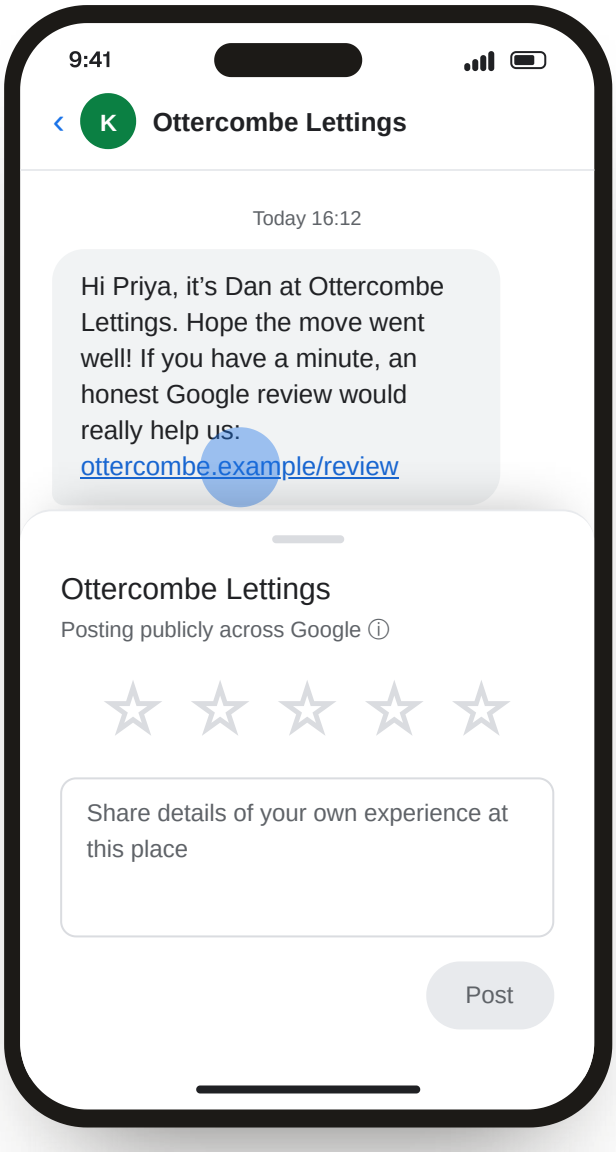
Ottercombe Lettings emailed new tenants "please leave us a review on Google", with no link, and few did. It made a direct link from its Business Profile, shortened it, put a QR code on the move-in welcome card and added one automatic reminder five days later. A tap test showed the old route took five taps and the new one two. It watched requests, clicks and new reviews in its sheet.

Test it

1 Read your request

1. Open your current review request (email, text, completion pack).
2. Does it include a direct link, or only "leave us a review"? Does it mention stars, staff names or a reward? It should do none of those.

Illustration



Two taps from the message to the stars: the direct review link opens Google's review form with the agency already chosen. Without the link, the same client has to search, pick the right profile and find the button. Made-up agency.

2 The tap test

1. Tap the link in your own request, on your phone, and count the taps to the review box. It should be two or fewer.
2. Try it in your email app and in WhatsApp, signed in and signed out of Google, on an iPhone and an Android if you can.
3. Stop at the review box. Never post a test review: it would break Google's rules.

Google: get your review link (support.google.com/business/answer/16816815?hl=en)

3 The QR test

1. Print the QR code at the size you'll use, and scan it from arm's length in normal light.
2. Check it opens the right branch. Repeat for every branch.

4 The reminder check

1. Find out whether any follow-up goes out at all, including CRM automations, tool sequences and staff chasing by phone.
2. Count them. The target is one reminder, four or five days after the request.

5 Ask AI

AI prompt

Here is my review request and my reminder. Count the steps the reader must take. Flag any pressure words, any wording that steers the rating, and anything that could be seen as an incentive. Suggest a shorter version in plain UK English. Do not add rewards, star targets or staff names.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Get your link and QR code

1. On a computer: business.google.com, then Read reviews, then Get more reviews. Copy the link and save the QR code.
2. Put the link in every request template, and the QR code on welcome cards, completion packs and the office wall.
3. Save every branch's link in one shared document.

Google: get your review link (support.google.com/business/answer/16816815?hl=en), Google Business Profile (business.google.com)

2 Count the clicks

Clicks are interest, not reviews, but they show which channel works.

1. Make a short link per branch and per channel with a free shortener such as Bitly.
2. Track the funnel: requests sent, then clicks, then new reviews.
3. There's no UK data on whether email, text or WhatsApp works best, so test in your own business.

Bitly (bitly.com)

3 Send one reminder, to everyone

1. Four or five days after the request, to everyone who got the first one and hasn't reviewed or opted out.
2. No automation? Add "request sent" and "reminder sent" columns to your sheet and send each Monday.
3. Check any tool's sequence. One example sends a text at one hour, an email on day three and a WhatsApp on day seven: that's three messages. Set it to one request and one reminder.

4 Stop once they've reviewed, whatever they wrote

1. Google doesn't tell you who used your link, so check new reviewer names by hand, or use a tool that detects reviews.
2. If a tool stops reminders after a review, check it does so for any star rating, not only five stars. Anything else is selective.
3. If you can't tell, write the reminder so it works either way.

5 Use the reminder wording

1. "Hi [first name], a quick reminder in case the last few days were busy. If you have a minute, we'd really value your honest feedback on how we did: [link]. If you've already left a review, thank you, and please ignore this. We won't message you about this again. [Opt-out line]"
2. Never mention stars, never offer anything, never imply a deadline.

Then: After any change to your Business Profile, tap-test the link again. A one-minute test each quarter is cheap insurance.

Keep it up

Set the link and reminder once. Tap-test the link each quarter, and review the reminder's timing and tone every few months. **(Set once, test quarterly)**

Sources

1. Tips to improve your local ranking on Google, Google Business Profile Help. support.google.com/business/answer/7091
2. Local Search Ranking Factors 2026, Whitespark, 2026. whitespark.ca/local-search-ranking-factors

Never incentivise or gate: UK law and platform rules

Don’t give anything in return for a review (incentivising), and don’t choose who you ask, or where you send them, by how happy they seem (gating). Both break the platforms’ rules, and UK law now bans fake reviews and hidden incentives outright.

Priority 7%, How often: A standing rule, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/never-incentivise-or-gate

Why it matters

Rewards, prize draws, rating screens and “only ask the happy ones” are all common, and all now risk your reviews, your profile and a regulator’s attention.

The evidence

Official guidance ●●●●●

The DMCC Act, the CMA’s guidance (CMA208) and Google’s and Trustpilot’s policies. Penalty details from the CMA and law-firm summaries. No enforcement against an estate agent found yet.

Do this first

Check every review request you send, in every system and by every person, for anything offered and for anyone left out.

In plain English

Imagine a class vote for the best teacher, where the teacher hands out sweets to anyone who votes for them and only asks the pupils who already like them. The result wouldn’t tell you what the class really thinks.

A restaurant that only hands comment cards to the tables that smiled. The cards look good and tell you nothing true.

Why it matters

Incentivised reviews read differently, even when they’re genuine, and a profile that looks bought undermines every review on it. In YouGov’s 2025 survey of 2,119 British adults, 64% said fake or overly positive reviews would put them off. A few honest negative reviews from a broad base build far more trust than a suspiciously perfect score.

Buyers: Rely on reviews to choose an agent, and can be misled by rewards or filters.

Tenants: Trust a profile that reflects every tenant, including the ones who had a problem.

Sellers: Are trusting you with a very large asset. A filtered picture is the last thing they need.

Landlords: Often compare several sources. A suspiciously perfect profile makes them look harder.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Official guidance

This isn't a ranking lever. It's a rule. Google bans incentives, reviews from staff or family, and asking only for positive reviews; since April 2026 it also bans asking staff to collect a set number of reviews or reviews that name them. Trustpilot bans being selective about who you invite, timing invitations so only satisfied customers get them, any incentive (including prize draws), and inviting staff or family. Breaking the rules risks removed reviews, warnings on your profile or suspension. Google also gave the CMA undertakings in January 2025 to act more firmly on fake reviews.

10%
of global turnover: the maximum CMA fine (or £300,000, if higher)

6 Apr 2025
UK fake review ban in force

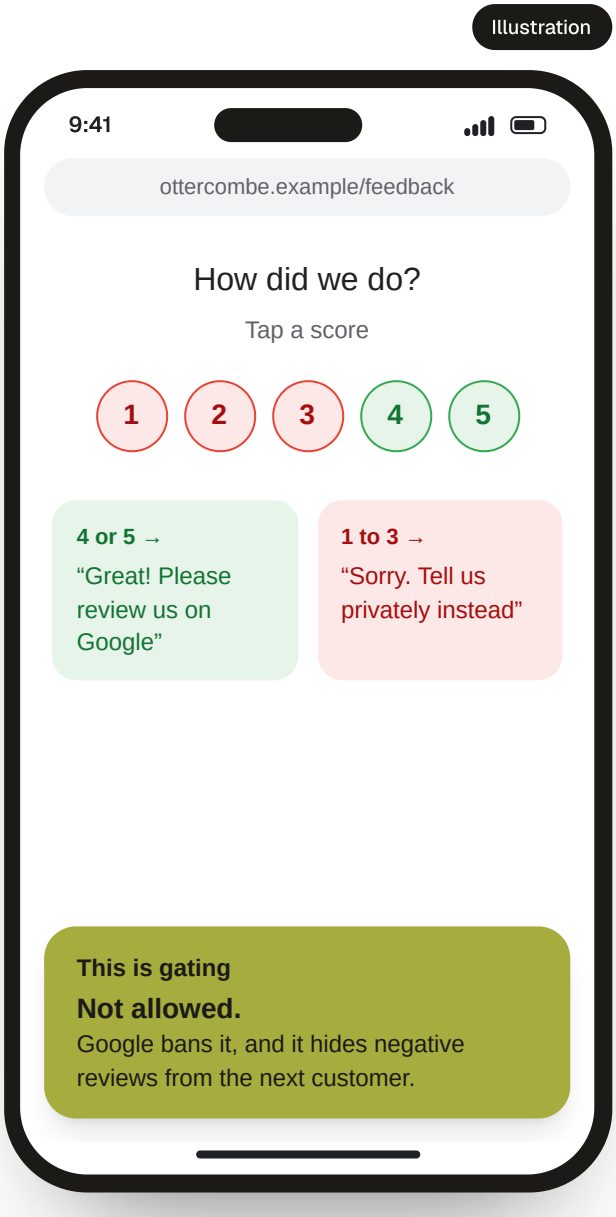
An agent example

A lettings branch used an automatic "How did we do, 1 to 5?" page after move-in. Fours and fives were sent on to Google; lower scores went to an internal form. A new regional manager spotted it in a process review. The branch removed the filter, sent the same Google link to every tenant and landlord, and kept the internal survey as a separate, optional question.

Test it

1 The offer check

1. Look at every review request you send, in every system and by every person.
2. Does any of them offer anything: a discount, a prize draw, a thank-you gift, a reduced fee?



Review gating: a score screen that sends happy clients to Google and unhappy ones to a private form. It breaks Google’s rules and hides negative reviews from the next customer. Send everyone the same link instead. Made-up agency.

2 The everyone check

1. Take your last 30 completed sales, lets and moves. Mark who got a request.
2. Anyone missing, and why? “He seemed unhappy” is the wrong answer.

3 The screen check

1. Does your link go straight to the review page, or through a rating screen or survey that sends people different ways?

4 The staff and supplier check

1. Ask every team member and every provider, in writing, how they ask for reviews.
2. Look for quotas, league tables, scripts, “please mention Sarah”, family reviews or bought reviews.

5 Read the rules

1. Skim Google’s policy and the CMA’s short guide, and tick each point against what you do.

Google’s review policy (support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114?hl=en), CMA fake reviews guidance (www.gov.uk/government/publications/fake-reviews)

6 Ask AI

AI prompt

Here is a review request from an estate agency. Which phrases could be read as an incentive, a pre-screen or pressure on the rating? Do not give legal advice.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Remove every incentive

1. No discounts, vouchers, gifts, fee reductions or prize draws for a review.
2. If you want to thank people for their time, do it separately and not tied to a review.

2 Take the filter out of the path

1. Send the same review link to everyone. If you run an internal survey, send the link to every respondent, whatever they scored.
2. Automate requests so no person chooses who’s asked (lesson 2.1).
3. Never switch requests off after a bad month and back on after a good one.

3 Write the rule down for staff and suppliers

1. One page: no incentives, no quotas or league tables, no scripts or suggested wording, no staff or family reviews, no asking clients to name someone, no suppressing complaints.
2. Have everyone sign it, and get written confirmation from any review provider.
3. Reward staff for service (response times, complaints resolved), never for review counts.

4 Check contracts and settlement wording

1. Remove any clause that stops a client reviewing, or that trades a refund for taking a review down.
2. The CMA says making a dispute's resolution depend on not leaving a negative review interferes with reviews. Take a solicitor's advice on anything you're unsure of.

Business Companion: reviews and endorsements (www.businesscompanion.info/en/quick-guides/services/reviews-and-endorsements)

Then: This is a standing rule, not a recurring check. Re-check only when you change a supplier, a tool or a staff process.

Keep it up

Set once. Re-check whenever a supplier, tool or staff process changes. **(A standing rule)**

Go deeper: What the law actually says

The Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (Schedule 20, paragraph 13) makes three things unfair in all circumstances: submitting or commissioning a fake review or one that hides it was incentivised; publishing reviews or review information (ratings, counts, summaries) in a misleading way; and publishing reviews without taking reasonable and proportionate steps to prevent and remove banned ones. It's been in force since 6 April 2025.

The CMA's guidance (CMA208, 4 April 2025) adds the detail. "Commissioning" isn't just money: discounts, vouchers and freebies count. Asking customers for reviews in general is fine, as long as you don't decide in advance what they'll say. Incentivised reviews are only lawful if clearly labelled as incentivised, and Google and Trustpilot ban them anyway. Encouraging only satisfied customers to review is cherry-picking. Stopping and starting invitations, or offering to settle a dispute on condition there's no negative review, interferes with negative reviews. And a business that shows reviews on its own website is a publisher, with the same duty to keep banned reviews out.

The Act: Schedule 20 (www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2024/13/schedule/20), CMA fake reviews guidance (www.gov.uk/government/publications/fake-reviews)

Go deeper: Penalties and enforcement

The CMA can now enforce consumer law itself, without going to court, with fines of up to 10% of global turnover or £300,000, whichever is higher. In March 2026 it opened five investigations into review practices: Autotrader and Feefo (whether 1-star reviews were kept off the site and out of star ratings), Dignity (whether staff were asked to write positive reviews), Just Eat (whether ratings were inflated) and Pasta Evangelists (whether customers got undisclosed discounts for 5-star reviews). No findings had been published when we checked. Feefo is a platform some agents use; no wrongdoing has been established.

Paying others doesn't move the risk. In 2016 a firm that wrote over 800 fake reviews for 86 businesses gave undertakings to the CMA, which warned the businesses involved that they could be liable too.

CMA: five businesses under investigation (www.gov.uk/government/news/fake-and-misleading-reviews-5-businesses-under-cma-investigation)

Go deeper: Gating in agency life: how it creeps in

• A negotiator only emails clients who said thank you on the phone.

• A “rate us 1 to 5” screen sends high scores to Google and low scores to a private form.

• Clients who complained are quietly skipped.

• Requests stop after a bad month and restart after a good one.

• A settlement is offered on condition the review comes down.

• A prize draw for everyone who reviews. Even if the law may not treat a chance of a prize as commissioning, Google and Trustpilot ban incentives of any kind.

Go deeper: Two estate agency cautionary tales

In 2018 the ASA upheld a complaint against an online agent whose testimonial described an agent’s work at a previous firm, implying it was about the new one. In 2019 an online agency agreed to remove claims based on reviews from before a change of ownership. Reviews have to be about the business that shows them, as it is now.

ASA ruling: Alpinum Ltd (2018) (www.asa.org.uk/rulings/alpinum-ltd-a18-451917.html)

Sources

1. Prohibited and restricted content, Google Maps user contributed content policy. support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114
2. How UK shoppers check if an online store is legit before purchasing, YouGov, 2025. yougov.com/en-gb/articles/53836-how-uk-shoppers-check-if-an-online-store-is-legit-before-purchasing
3. Fake reviews: guidance for businesses (CMA208), Competition and Markets Authority. gov.uk/government/publications/fake-reviews-cma208
4. Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024, Schedule 20, legislation.gov.uk. legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2024/13/schedule/20
5. Testimonials and endorsements, Advertising Standards Authority. asa.org.uk/advice-online/testimonials-and-endorsements.html

Ask everyone, lawfully: privacy, consent and your team

Ask every client, not only the ones you think are happy, and ask in a way that follows consumer law, data protection rules and the platforms' policies. This lesson also covers who in your team does the asking, and what they must never do.

Priority 6%, How often: Twice a year, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/ask-everyone-lawfully

Why it matters

Lettings clients forgotten, "difficult" files skipped, no privacy wording, staff chasing quotas: all common, and all risky.

The evidence

Official guidance ●●●●●

The DMCC Act, CMA guidance, Google and Trustpilot policies and the ICO's pages. The privacy routine and staff rules are our recommended practice; the ICO hasn't said whether a review request is marketing.

Do this first

Check who wasn't asked in your last 30 completions, and why.

In plain English

If a teacher asked only her favourite pupils how good her lessons were, the answer would be useless and unfair. Everyone gets the same question, and everyone is free to say no thanks.

A food inspector who only visits the kitchens the owner picks. The report might look good, but nobody should trust it.

Why it matters

A set of reviews from every kind of client is the only one a reader can trust, and it's the only kind the law and the platforms allow. A few critical reviews are normal: Google's own advice says a mix of positive and negative looks more trustworthy than a perfect score. Landlords and tenants have different experiences, so ask them separately, about your service, not about the property or the landlord's decisions.

Buyers: Get one polite request and one reminder, with a clear way to opt out.

Tenants: Asked about your service, separately from the landlord, and never during a deposit dispute.

Sellers: Asked in wording that fits their experience, with the same privacy rights as everyone else.

Landlords: Asked separately from their tenants, and rely on unfiltered reviews when they choose an agent.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Official guidance

Google bans asking only for positive reviews, reviews from current or former staff, contractors, competitors and family, and (since April 2026) asking staff to collect a set number of reviews or reviews with specific content, such as a staff member's name. Trustpilot says invite everyone the same way, with no family, staff or shareholders. Bing has no separate rules we could find, but the UK law applies whichever platform shows your reviews. AI assistants read the same public reviews, so a skewed set changes what they say.

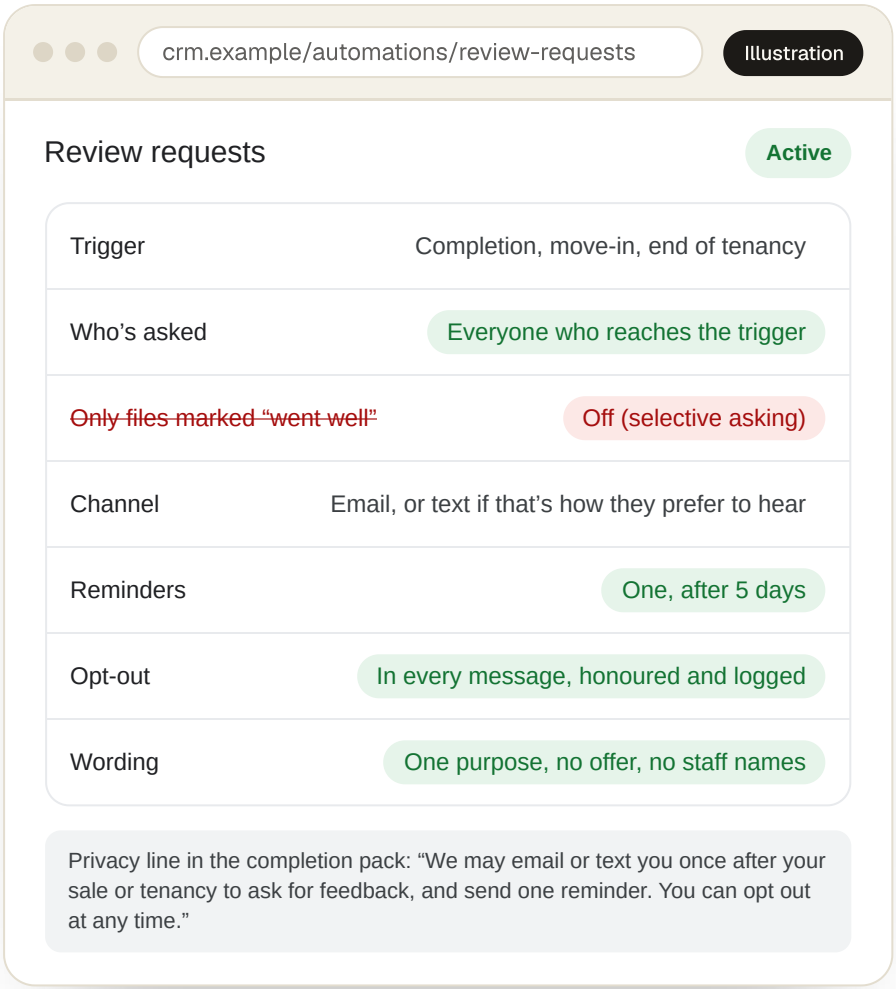
An agent example

Haverwick Lettings only sent review requests for tenancies the property manager had marked "went well". Reading the CMA's guidance, the director realised that was selective asking. The agency removed the "went well" box, set the system to send one request and one reminder to every tenant and landlord at the trigger, and added a privacy line to its welcome pack.

Test it

1 The ask-rate check

1. Take your last 30 completed clients across sales, lettings and management. Mark who got a request.
2. Ask rate = requests sent ÷ clients who reached the trigger. The target is everyone you can lawfully contact.
3. Write down the reason for each person not asked.



Review requests set up to ask everyone lawfully: a system trigger rather than a person’s judgement, one reminder, an opt-out in every message, and the “went well” filter switched off. Made-up system.

2 The pattern check

1. Look at who wasn’t asked. All lettings? All tenants? Withdrawn sales? Files someone judged “difficult”?
2. Any pattern linked to how the client felt is a warning sign.

3 The message check

1. Read your request and reminder against this list: one purpose only, no promotion, no stars, no staff names, no reward, an opt-out line, no pressure.

4 The paper-trail check

1. Read your terms of business, privacy notice and completion pack. Do they say you may ask for feedback, how, and how to opt out?

ICO: electronic marketing (ico.org.uk/for-organisations/direct-marketing-and-privacy-and-electronic-communications/guide-to-pecr/electronic-and-telephone-marketing)

5 Ask AI

AI prompt

Check this review request against these rules: one purpose, no promotion, no wording that predetermines the review or the star rating, no incentive, no staff names, a clear opt-out. List any breaches and suggest plain-English fixes. This is not legal advice; a professional will check it.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Write a one-page asking policy

1. Who is asked, when, how and by whom, and the only valid reasons for not asking: no contact details, they asked not to be contacted, or a short pause while a live dispute is settled.
2. Never switch invitations off because of a bad run.
3. Sign it off at director level and train the team.

2 Add a privacy line and an opt-out

A review request may count as marketing under PECR. The ICO hasn't said, so take the cautious route.

1. Tell people early, in your terms, privacy notice and completion pack, that you'll send one request and at most one reminder.
2. A suggested line: "We may email or text you once after your sale or tenancy to ask for feedback, and send one reminder. You can opt out at any time."
3. Keep the message to one purpose: no valuation offers or referral prompts in it.
4. Put an opt-out in every message, honour it at once and record it. Treat WhatsApp like a text.
5. Send only to the client, not their solicitor, and use as little data as you can.

ICO: electronic marketing (ico.org.uk/for-organisations/direct-marketing-and-privacy-and-electronic-communications/guide-to-pecr/electronic-and-telephone-marketing)

3 Brief your team

1. No quotas, league tables or bonuses for review counts. No scripts. No "please mention Sarah". No reviews from staff, family or friends.
2. When a client praises someone in person: "Thank you. We'll email you a link, and honest feedback is always welcome."
3. Let the system send requests, so nobody chooses who's asked. Noting internally who handled a file is fine.

Google's review policy (support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114?hl=en), Trustpilot's guidelines for businesses (corporate.trustpilot.com/legal/for-businesses/guidelines-for-businesses)

4 Ask a professional where you're unsure

1. Your data protection adviser or solicitor for the privacy notice and whether the "soft opt-in" applies to you.
2. Your CRM supplier for whether it logs sends and opt-outs.

Then: Review the policy and wording twice a year, and whenever the law, a platform's rules or your process changes.

Keep it up

Review the asking policy and message wording twice a year. **(Twice a year)**

Go deeper: PECR, UK GDPR and the soft opt-in

PECR covers marketing by email and text. The ICO says routine service messages aren't direct marketing, but messages with significant promotional content are. We found no ICO guidance on whether a plain review request is a service message or marketing. Many practitioners treat it as marketing-adjacent, because it promotes your reputation and isn't needed to deliver the service, which is why we recommend the cautious routine above.

The "soft opt-in" lets you email or text individuals without fresh consent if you got their details during a sale or negotiation, you're promoting your own similar services, and you offered an opt-out when you collected the details and in every message. Whether a review request counts is arguable, so treat it as a question for your adviser. Under UK GDPR you can rely on legitimate interests and explain it in your privacy notice; a person's right to object to direct marketing is absolute. Since February 2026, PECR fines can reach the same level as UK GDPR fines.

ICO: electronic marketing (ico.org.uk/for-organisations/direct-marketing-and-privacy-and-electronic-communications/guide-to-pecr/electronic-and-telephone-marketing)

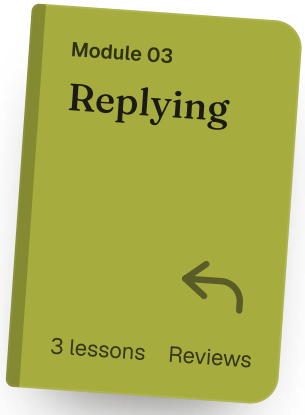
Go deeper: The Renters' Rights Act and asking

Phase one of the Renters' Rights Act started in England on 1 May 2026: periodic tenancies, no more section 21 evictions, rent increases once a year, no rental bidding and limits on rent in advance. There's no evidence yet on how it affects reviews, but change brings friction: rent increase notices, ended tenancies and landlords unhappy with new limits. Ask landlords and tenants at stable moments, ask them separately, and still ask everyone.

GEO 8.2: The Renters' Rights Act (/geocourse/renters-rights-act)

Sources

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2. Fake reviews: guidance for businesses (CMA208), Competition and Markets Authority. gov.uk/government/publications/fake-reviews-cma208
3. Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024, Schedule 20, legislation.gov.uk. legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2024/13/schedule/20
4. Prohibited and restricted content, Google Maps user contributed content policy. support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114
5. Guidelines for businesses, Trustpilot. corporate.trustpilot.com/legal/for-businesses/guidelines-for-businesses



03

Replying

Replying to every review, handling the bad ones well, and dealing with fakes.

3.1 Replying to every review, within hours

3.2 A real process for negative reviews, and taking it offline

3.3 Fake, unfair and defamatory reviews: reporting, removal and legal options

Replying to every review, within hours

A genuine, specific reply to every review, five-star ones included, written within hours rather than weeks. Two habits: reply to all, and reply fast.

Priority 8%, How often: Daily, about 10 minutes, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/reply-to-every-review

Why it matters

Most reviews never get a reply, especially the five-star ones, and a reply that arrives weeks later reads as nobody caring.

The evidence

Study ●●●●○

The benefit of replying comes from US surveys and hotel studies, not UK agents. Google's guidance covers how to reply, with no ranking claim. Same-day replies are our recommended practice.

Do this first

Count how many of your last 20 reviews have a reply, then clear the backlog, oldest first.

In plain English

If a friend gives you a present and you say "thank you, I love the blue one", they feel noticed. If you never say anything, even a good present starts to feel wasted. A shop that answers everyone in the queue looks like it's listening.

Answering the door. Answer quickly and kindly, and visitors relax. Answer a week later, and it doesn't matter how nice you are.

There's a live demo of this on the website: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/reply-to-every-review

Why it matters

The next seller, landlord, tenant or buyer reads your reply as well as the review. A reply to a five-star review is visible proof that someone's paying attention. Speed reads as care: a reply after the frustration has settled into resentment rarely lands the same way. In BrightLocal's 2026 survey (1,002 US adults), 80% said they'd be more likely to use a business that replies to all its reviews, and half were put off by templated replies.

Buyers: Read replies to judge how you treat people when things go wrong.

Tenants: Look for whether anyone's listening, especially on repairs and deposits.

Sellers: Read replies to judge whether you're accountable.

Landlords: Often read your replies to complaints before the reviews themselves.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Study

Replying isn't a confirmed ranking factor. Google says positive reviews and helpful replies can help your business stand out, which is about people, not ranking. In Whitespark's 2026 survey of 47 local search experts, replying to most reviews ranked 122nd of 187 factors, and keywords in replies 182nd, so stuffing replies with town names isn't worth it. Google checks replies against its content policy before they appear (usually within 10 minutes, sometimes up to 30 days), tells the reviewer you replied, and lets them edit their review afterwards, which updates its date.

29%
of 5-star Google reviews get a reply (UENI, 229,882 reviews)

10%
of 1-star reviews get one

An agent example

Silverdune Estates had 64 Google reviews and 11 replies, almost all to complaints. On a Friday afternoon the manager cleared the backlog oldest to newest, with a sentence naming something specific in each. She made the lettings assistant owner of replies, with the sales administrator as deputy, and set a 10-minute slot each morning. A month later, most replies were going out the same day.

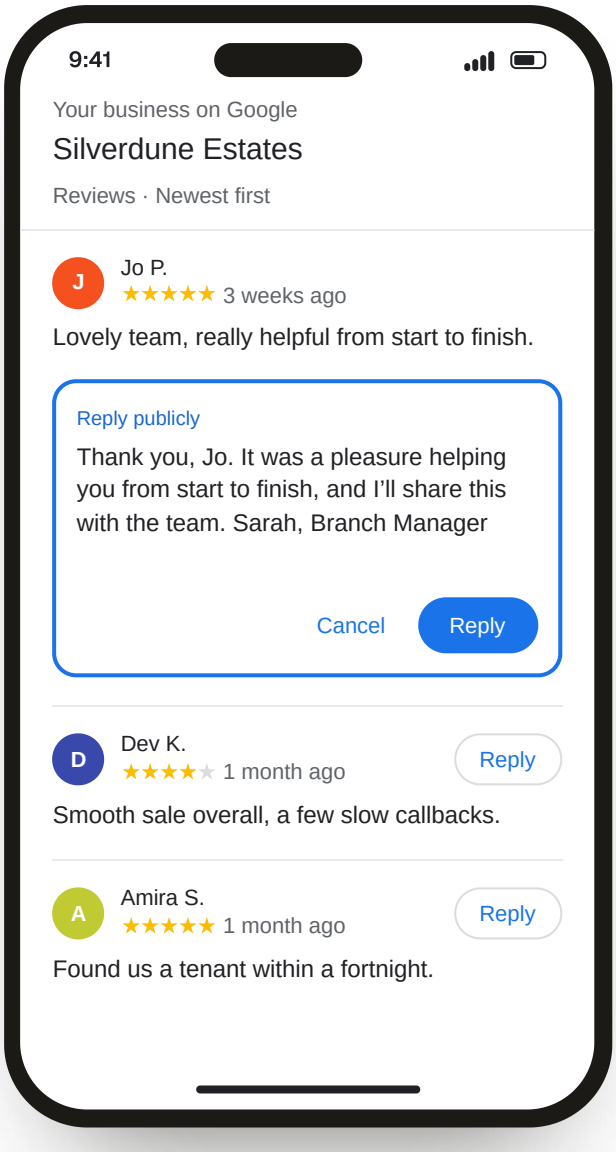
Test it

1 The reply count

1. Open your Business Profile and go to Read reviews.
2. Count how many of your last 20 reviews have a reply. Note how many unanswered ones are five-star: that's usually where the gap is.

Google Business Profile (business.google.com)

Illustration



Replying from your phone, in your Business Profile on Google. Work through the reviews with no reply, oldest first; a three-sentence reply takes about a minute. Made-up agency and reviews.

2 The speed check

1. For your last 10 replies, compare the date the review was posted with the date of your reply.
2. Are negative reviews answered faster or slower than positive ones?

3 The stranger test

1. Read your last five replies as if you were deciding whether to trust you.
2. Do they mention something specific, or could they sit under any review unchanged? Search for repeated phrases.

4 The safety check

1. Read the same replies for personal data, fee or rent amounts, deposit details, reference numbers, allegations or offers. Edit out anything like that.

5 Ask AI

AI prompt
Here are 10 anonymised replies from an estate agency. Which sound copy-and-pasted? Which contain personal or confidential information? Which could be warmer or more specific? Don't rewrite them yet.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Clear the backlog in one sitting

1. Oldest to newest, short and specific. Don't let it build up again.
2. On Google: Read reviews, the reply icon, type your reply, then Reply. To change it later, choose Edit.

Google: reply to reviews (support.google.com/business/answer/3474050?hl=en)

2 Write replies people want to read

Three or four sentences: thank them, mention one specific thing from their review, and sign with a first name and role.

1. Five stars: "Thank you, [first name]. I'm glad the move went smoothly, and I'll pass your kind words to [colleague] in the lettings team. We wish you well in the new home. [Your first name], [branch]"
2. Mixed: "Thank you for the feedback, [first name]. I'm pleased [good point]. I'm sorry [problem] wasn't as it should be, and we're looking at it this week. If you'd like to talk it through, please call [name] on [branch number]."
3. Vary your wording. If every reply says "Thank you for your kind review", readers notice.

Google: tips for replying (support.google.com/business/answer/7035772?hl=en)

3 Keep replies data-light

Everything in a reply is public, permanent and searchable.

1. Never include addresses, reference numbers, rent or fee amounts, deposit details, or anything about a tenant or landlord the reviewer hasn't said publicly.
2. On a negative review, avoid confirming they were your client. The Property Ombudsman's lettings code says client information may only be used for the purpose it was given.
3. Leave out allegations, legal wording, offers and arguments about the facts.

4 Make speed possible

1. Turn on notifications to a shared inbox (lesson 1.3), so reviews reach you when they're posted.
2. Give one named person ownership of replies, with a deputy for holidays. Unclear ownership is usually why replies slip.
3. Aim for a reply within a few working hours, and by the next morning at the latest. If you can't answer properly yet, post a short holding reply the same day (lesson 3.2).

5 Let AI draft, never post

1. Edit it so it sounds like you, and post it yourself. Never let a tool post replies automatically.

AI prompt

Draft a three-sentence UK-English reply to this review for an estate agency. Thank them, mention one specific point from the review, include no personal data, offer nothing, and don't argue. [paste anonymised review text]

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Then: Check your average reply time each month. A fast, poor reply is worse than a slightly later good one.

Keep it up

Daily, or at least a few times a week. A month's backlog is a much bigger job than staying on top of it. **(Daily, about 10 minutes)**

Go deeper: Does replying to everything really help?

A peer-reviewed study of TripAdvisor hotels (Proserpio and Zervas, 2017) found hotels that started replying received about 12% more reviews and a rating about 0.12 stars higher on average. But a Cornell hotel study (2016) found the gains levelled off at around a 40% reply rate and warned that many poor replies can be worse than none. Neither is about UK agents. Our reading: quality matters more than volume, so reply to everything only if every reply is specific.

You'll see a claim that 89% of consumers are more likely to choose a business that replies to every review, and that a reviewer is three times more likely to update their rating if you reply within four hours. We couldn't trace either to a study, so this course doesn't rely on them.

Sources

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2. Local Search Ranking Factors 2026, Whitespark, 2026. whitespark.ca/local-search-ranking-factors
3. Google review response study, UENI, 2026. ueni.com/blog/google-review-response-study
4. Codes of practice, The Property Ombudsman. tpos.co.uk

A real process for negative reviews, and taking it offline

A written, repeatable way to handle every negative review: sort it, acknowledge it the same day, give one calm public reply, and take the detail somewhere private. And a rule, agreed in advance, for when a conversation moves offline.

Priority 7%, How often: Same day, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/negative-reviews

Why it matters

A defensive, copy-pasted or slow reply to a bad review tells every future reader what to expect, and a public argument is worse.

The evidence

Practitioner view

Practitioner view and common sense, with official guidance for complaint handling (the redress schemes' codes) and Google's reply rules. No UK study on replies to negative reviews.

Do this first

Write a one-page process: who sorts it, who replies the same day, and when it moves to a phone call.

In plain English

Someone shouts across the street that your lemonade is sour. You can argue in front of everyone, or say "I'm sorry, come over and let me fix it". The people watching care more about how you answer than about who's right.

The defensive script: A reply that clearly wasn't written for this particular complaint tells every future reader you don't listen. It can do more damage than the review itself.

Why it matters

Readers do look at the bad reviews, and at how you answered them. In YouGov's 2025 survey, 69% of British adults said mostly negative reviews would put them off. A specific, calm, accountable reply is often why someone still books a valuation despite the review above it. A public back-and-forth about dates, figures and who said what reads as messy even if you're right, and a phone call usually resolves things faster than typing.

Buyers: See how you treat someone who's unhappy, and whether you give out private details.

Tenants: Often write about repairs and deposits. They're watching for a calm, fair answer.

Sellers: Compare how agents handle complaints before choosing who to invite.

Landlords: Are often the writers of the complaint, and the readers who compare answers most closely.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Practitioner view

No direct ranking effect: search engines don't read tone, but customers do. Google only removes reviews that break its policies; a dispute between you and a customer isn't enough. Trustpilot lets you reply and flag, but says flagging must be consistent and not done "too quickly or for the wrong reasons". Some AI tools summarise review themes, and we don't know whether they read replies, so write the calm reply for the human reader.

An agent example

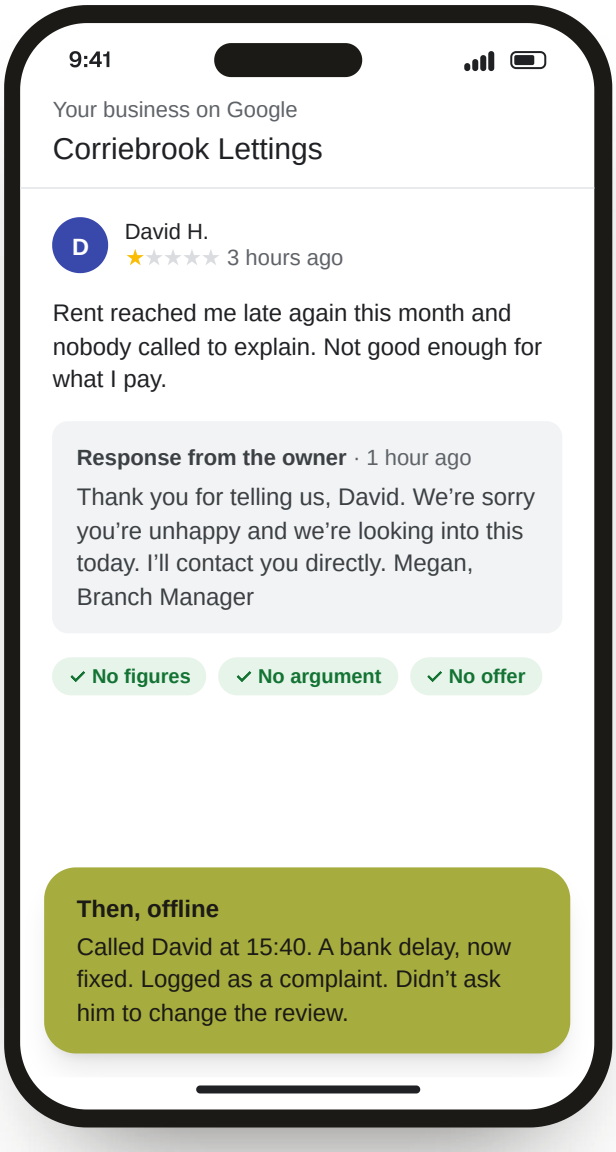
Corriebrook Lettings got a one-star review from a landlord about a late rent payment. The branch manager posted a three-sentence apology that mentioned no figures, called him the same afternoon, found a bank delay, and logged the complaint. She didn't ask him to change the review. Three weeks later he updated it to four stars himself and added a line about the call. That doesn't always happen, and she hadn't expected it.

Test it

1 The stranger test

1. Reread your last three replies to negative reviews as a stranger would.
2. Does each name the specific issue, or could it be pasted under any complaint?

Illustration



A one-star review, answered the same afternoon: a short public reply with no figures and no argument, then a phone call. The detail stays private. Made-up agency and review.

2 The length check

1. Mark any public reply longer than two or three sentences, or that mentions dates, figures or who said what.
2. Each of those should have moved offline sooner.

3 The Friday fire drill

1. A one-star review lands at 5pm on Friday. Who sees it, who replies, by when, and who's told?
2. If you can't answer in a minute, you've found your gap.

4 The complaints link

1. Check your written complaints procedure, and whether anyone logs a negative review as a complaint.
2. Compare it with your redress scheme's code. For lettings, that's the Property Ombudsman's code or the Property Redress Scheme's terms.

TPO lettings code (from 1 May 2026) (www.tpos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/TPOE22-9-Code-of-Practice-for-Residential-Letting-Agents-A4-England-Updated-1-May-2026.pdf)

5 Ask AI

AI prompt

Here are three anonymised replies to one-star reviews from an estate agency. Which sound defensive or copy-pasted? Which include details that should stay private? Suggest a calmer version of each, with one apology, one specific point and an invitation to call. Don't admit facts I haven't given you.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Step 1: sort it into one of five groups

1. Fair complaint: something did go wrong. Acknowledge it, apologise where it's due, fix it.
2. Misunderstanding: the facts differ but the feeling is real. Reply calmly and move offline.
3. Fake, or not a client: you can't match it to anything (lesson 3.3). Reply once, factually, and flag it.
4. Abusive: threats, hate or private information. Flag it, and don't reply in kind.
5. Legal: alleges a crime, discrimination or a safety problem, or threatens legal action. Post at most a holding line and go to a director or solicitor first.

2 Step 2: acknowledge it the same working day

1. Thank them, apologise for how they feel (that isn't admitting the facts), name who'll call, and give a way to reach them.
2. Holding reply: "Thank you for telling us, [first name]. We're sorry you're unhappy and we're looking into this today. [Name] will contact you directly."
3. A review that arrives after hours is answered first thing next morning.

3 Step 3: one owner, and treat it as a complaint

1. One named person owns each negative review until it's closed, and tells the branch manager the same day.
2. Log it in your complaints log. Whether a public review counts as a formal complaint for your redress scheme is for you to confirm with them; treating it as one is the safe default.
3. The Property Ombudsman's lettings code (from 1 May 2026) says acknowledge written complaints within 3 working days, send a formal outcome within 15 working days, and keep complaint records for six years.

TPO lettings code (from 1 May 2026) (www.tpos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/TPOE22-9-Code-of-Practice-for-Residential-Letting-Agents-A4-England-Updated-1-May-2026.pdf)

4 Step 4: one calm public reply, then offline

Agree the rule in advance, so it isn't decided in the moment under pressure.

1. One calm public reply. Anything involving dates, figures, documents or names goes to a call or a private message.
2. Wording: "Thank you for raising this, [first name]. We'd like to understand and put it right. Please call [name] on [branch number] or email [branch email]."
3. No personal mobile numbers or reference numbers in public, and no screenshots of private messages.

5 Know when not to move offline

1. A plain factual error about public information (opening hours, a fee on your website): one short public correction is fine.
2. A serious or legal allegation: post only a holding line and take advice first.
3. Never use "let's take this offline" to bury a review, or make a fix depend on it being removed.

6 Asking for an update, the right way

1. Only after a genuine fix, and never as part of the fix. Never offer money, a discount or a favour for changing or removing a review: Google, Trustpilot and the CMA all say no.
2. If the matter is closed and the client is happy, you may say once, separately, that they're welcome to update their review if they feel it no longer reflects their experience, with no pressure. Often the best route is to say nothing.

Then: Keep a row in your tracker for every negative review: date, platform, rating, group, owner, reply date, outcome and complaint reference. It's also your evidence if a review turns out to be fake.

Keep it up

As they arrive. A slow reply to a negative review loses most of its value. **(Same day)**

Go deeper: The Renters' Rights Act: be ready before the review lands

Phase one in England (1 May 2026) ended section 21 evictions, limited rent increases to once a year and banned rental bidding. There's no evidence yet on how it changes reviews, but expect landlords upset about losing section 21 and tenants upset about rent increases. Have your holding reply and escalation route ready.

Go deeper: Widely quoted figures we couldn't trace

You'll often read that 87% of unhappy customers contact a business before posting, and that 68% of negative reviews go unanswered. We couldn't trace either to a study. What we can source: in UENI's study of 229,882 Google reviews (2026), only about 10% of one-star reviews had a reply, and those that were answered waited an average of 19.5 days.

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2. Google review response study, UENI, 2026. ueni.com/blog/google-review-response-study
3. Codes of practice, The Property Ombudsman. tpos.co.uk
4. Fake reviews: guidance for businesses (CMA208), Competition and Markets Authority. gov.uk/government/publications/fake-reviews-cma208

Fake, unfair and defamatory reviews: reporting, removal and legal options

What to do when a review isn't a genuine customer's honest experience, breaks a platform's rules, or says something false and damaging. Most negative reviews are none of these. This lesson helps you tell the difference and use the right route.

Priority 4%, How often: As needed, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/fake-and-defamatory-reviews

Why it matters

Agents often waste weeks fighting genuine reviews, or retaliate in ways that make things worse, while real fakes go unreported.

The evidence

Official guidance ●●●●●

Google's help pages for the routes, the Defamation Act 2013 and Ministry of Justice guidance (England and Wales). No UK data on how often reports succeed.

Do this first

Check whether you can match your last 20 reviews, including the good ones, to a real client.

In plain English

If someone writes on the school noticeboard that you cheated, and you weren't even in school that day, you can ask the teacher to take it down. If you just don't like what they wrote, the teacher will say it's their opinion.

A parking ticket you think is wrong. Collect the evidence, appeal once through the proper channel, and accept the answer rather than arguing in the street.

Why it matters

Buyers and tenants can be misled by fake reviews, and harmed if a genuine complaint is wrongly dismissed as fake. Sellers and landlords may rely on a review that's false, or be the unhappy party whose real complaint you mustn't suppress. And fakes can be positive too: if staff, friends or a former supplier posted glowing reviews, that's a risk to you under the same rules (lesson 2.3).

Buyers: Can be steered towards an agent by praise that isn't real.

Tenants: Need a genuine complaint about a deposit or repair to stay up, not be reported as fake.

Sellers: May choose an agent on fake reviews, or be the unhappy client whose real review you mustn't suppress.

Landlords: Want to see complaints handled fairly in public before they hand over a property.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Official guidance

Google removes only what breaks its policies, such as fake engagement, conflicts of interest and unsubstantiated accusations of crime. Disagreement isn't enough. It usually takes several days to assess a report, and you get one appeal per flagged review. Trustpilot lets you flag reviews, with decisions and an appeal link by email. Bing shows reviews from other sites, so report them where they started. AI assistants may repeat a fake review's claims while it stays up, so report quickly and leave a calm reply with the correct facts.

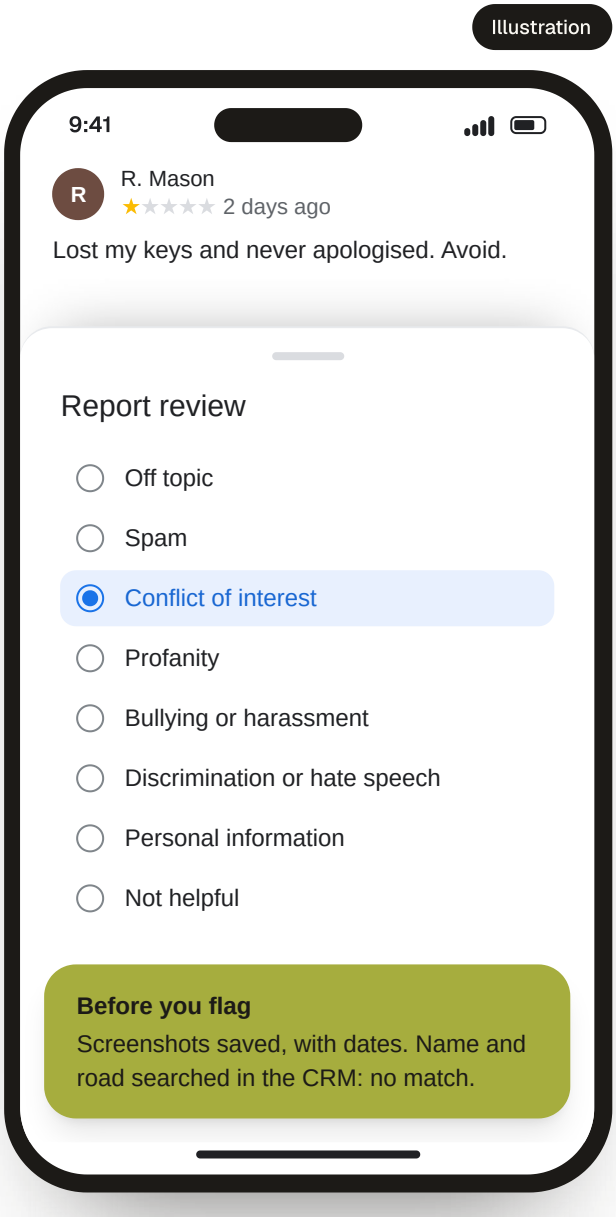
An agent example

Hartwell and Fennimore Estates got a one-star review from a "landlord" saying the branch lost his keys. The name and road matched nothing in the CRM, and the road was outside its area. The manager saved screenshots and a note of her search, posted a short reply saying she couldn't match the review to the branch and inviting contact, and flagged it. Google found no violation. She used her one appeal with the same evidence. When that failed too, she left the reply in place and moved on: it wasn't defamatory, and no financial loss could be shown.

Test it

1 Match your reviews

1. Go through your last 20 reviews, positive ones included. Can you match each to a real client or dealing?
2. Mark any you can't. Do this privately, and never publish what you found in your records.



Flagging a review on Google: save your evidence first, then report it once under the reason that matches the policy it breaks. Disagreeing with a review isn't a reason. Made-up review. Google's list of reasons may change.

2 Look at the reviewer

1. On a suspicious review, check the reviewer's other reviews, locations and dates.
2. Note patterns, such as many reviews of competitors on one day, or names that match staff, former staff, family or rivals.

3 Find the routes

1. Read Google's reporting page and find the flag option under Read reviews on your profile.

Google: report and remove reviews (support.google.com/business/answer/4596773?hl=en-GB)

4 Ask AI

AI prompt

Here is the text of an anonymised one-star review and a list of what my agency actually does. Which statements are factual claims I can check, which are opinions, and what evidence should I gather? Do not give legal advice and do not guess who wrote it.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Spot the signs (to investigate, not proof)

1. You can't find the person or the property in your records.
2. The details don't fit: a branch you don't have, a service you don't offer, a staff member who never worked for you.
3. Several reviews arrive close together with similar wording.
4. The reviewer is a competitor, a former employee or a relative, which Google treats as a conflict of interest.

2 Capture evidence first

1. Screenshots with dates, the web address, the reviewer's name and profile, a note of what you searched for in your CRM (not a copy of client data), and a timeline.
2. Keep it with the review's row in your tracker (lesson 3.2).

3 Report once, under the right rule

1. Google: Read reviews, the flag, then a reason. Or use the Reviews Management Tool to report a review and track its status.
2. Use your one appeal per review wisely, adding anything new. Don't keep resubmitting.
3. Report the same review on each platform where it appears, using that platform's route. There's a separate Google route for anyone demanding money to remove a review.

Google: report and remove reviews (support.google.com/business/answer/4596773?hl=en-GB)

4 Reply once, calmly

1. "We take every review seriously but can't match this to an experience with our branch. We've asked the platform to look at it. If you did deal with us, please contact [name] on [branch number]."
2. Say as little as possible, and never say who you think wrote it. Only mention that you've flagged it if you have.

5 Never retaliate

1. Don't post fake reviews about a competitor you suspect, or glowing fake ones to bury a bad one.
2. Don't offer anything for a review to be removed or changed, and don't pressure the reviewer.

6 Legal options, if it's serious

1. Take a solicitor's advice before any legal step. They can tell you whether a notice under the Defamation Act or a letter is worth it.
2. If a review includes private information such as a home address, flag it under the platform's rules first.
3. If a competitor or supplier is publishing fake reviews, the CMA's online reviews case page lists a contact. It isn't a route for removing a review you simply dislike.

Google: legal removal requests (support.google.com/legal/answer/3110420)

Then: Check your evidence log monthly, so no suspected fake sits unreported.

Keep it up

As they arrive. Check the evidence log monthly. **(As needed)**

Go deeper: Defamation, in plain English (England and Wales)

A statement is only defamatory if it causes, or is likely to cause, serious harm to reputation. For a business, that means serious financial loss (Defamation Act 2013, section 1). That's a high bar: you'd need evidence of lost instructions or income linked to the review.

Section 5 gives a website operator a defence if it didn't post the statement. It loses that defence if the poster can't be identified and the operator didn't handle a proper notice of complaint as the regulations require. The Ministry of Justice's guidance lists what a notice must contain. Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own law. Costs and outcomes vary, and there's no UK data on how often agents succeed.

Defamation Act 2013, section 1 (www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/26/section/1)

Sources

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2. Prohibited and restricted content, Google Maps user contributed content policy. support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114
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04

Every platform that counts

Google first, then Bing, Apple, Trustpilot, Facebook and the property review sites.

4.1 Claiming and running your Google reviews

4.2 Bing, Apple, Trustpilot, Facebook and the property review sites

Claiming and running your Google reviews

Your Google Business Profile is the listing that appears when someone looks you up on Google Search or Maps, and it carries your Google reviews. Claiming it means taking control of it; verifying it means proving to Google it's yours; running it means someone checks it every week. If it isn't claimed and verified, you can't reply to a single review on it.

Priority 10%, How often: Weekly, about 15 minutes, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/google-business-profile-reviews

Why it matters

Profiles set up years ago on a former employee's personal Gmail, with nobody able to reply and reviews piling up unanswered.

The evidence

Official guidance ●●●●●

Google's own help pages for the mechanics, the rules and reviews helping local ranking. The ranking order is an expert survey, not Google data.

Do this first

Sign in at business.google.com and check who owns each branch's profile, and whether you can reply.

In plain English

Imagine a noticeboard at the school gate where parents write what they think of the after-school club. If the club leader has no key and never looks at it, parents decide nobody cares. Claiming is getting the key. Running it is reading the board every week.

The shop window on the high street. Most people see it before they ever step inside, and a dusty, dated window says more than any leaflet.

Why it matters

For most people, Google reviews are the first reviews they see, often before they've opened your website. In YouGov's 2025 survey, 45% of British adults said they use Google reviews when checking an unfamiliar business. UK evidence on agents is thinner: in a 2017 HomeOwners Alliance survey only 19% of sellers had looked up reviews of their agent. Treat your Google reviews as something the next seller or landlord may well check, not something every one of them will.

Buyers: See your rating, recent reviews and replies on Google or Maps, often before your site.

Tenants: Look up the agent holding their deposit, usually after finding the property.

Sellers: Compare ratings, recency and how you handled complaints before inviting you to value.

Landlords: Look for rent collection, repairs and communication, and how you reply when things go wrong.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Official guidance

Google says local results depend partly on prominence, which includes how many reviews you have, and that more reviews and positive ratings can help local ranking. There's no way to pay for a better ranking, and no target rating, count or reply time. In Whitespark's 2026 survey of 47 local search experts (US and Canada centred), a high Google rating ranked 6th of 187 factors for the map results, the number of reviews with text 9th, recency 11th and a steady flow 14th, while replying to most reviews ranked 122nd. Google also shows AI-written review summaries in some places ("Summarized with Gemini"), including in the UK. Businesses can't write them; only real reviews change them.

6th
a high Google rating, of 187 local ranking factors (Whitespark 2026)

122nd
replying to most reviews

An agent example

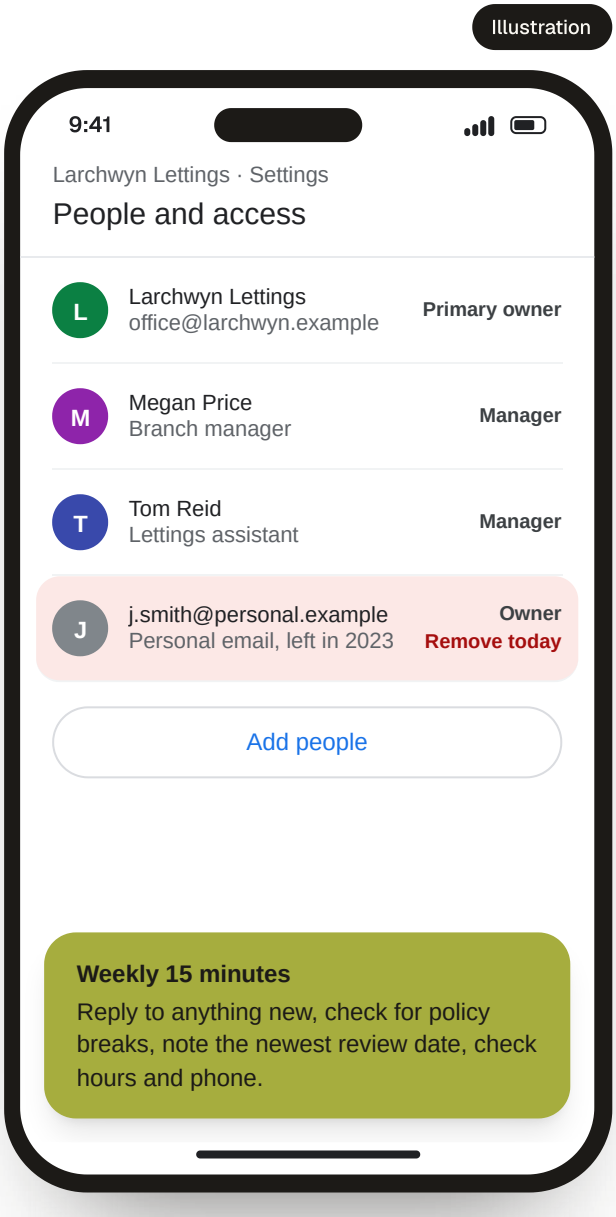
A lettings branch of Larchwyn Lettings had a profile set up years earlier by a former office junior on a personal Gmail. Nobody could reply, and 12 reviews sat unanswered, the newest five months old. The manager got access through Google's verification steps, made a head-office account the owner, added a second manager, and blocked out 15 minutes every Monday. Within a month every review had a reply.

Test it

1 Can you reply?

1. Sign in at business.google.com with the account you think owns the profile.
2. Can you see Read reviews and a reply option? If not, the profile is unclaimed, unverified or owned by someone else. Write down who.

Google Business Profile (business.google.com)



The ownership audit, in your profile's People and access settings. A company account should be the primary owner, with at least two managers. A former employee's personal email is the one to remove. Made-up agency and people.

2 One profile per branch

1. In a private window, search each branch name and town on Google and on Google Maps.
2. Check there's exactly one profile per branch. Note the rating, review count, newest review date and how many of the latest 20 have a reply.

3 The ownership audit

1. List everyone with access to each branch profile, and their role.
2. Are any of them former staff, personal Gmail accounts or an old web supplier? Is the Primary Owner a company account?

4 Ask AI

AI prompt

Here are my last 20 Google reviews and my replies, with all names, addresses and staff names removed. Which reviews have no reply? Which replies are generic? Which reviews might break Google's review policy? Don't guess beyond the text.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Get control

1. Claim and verify the profile at business.google.com, following Google's on-screen steps. The verification options vary.
2. If a profile already exists, claim that one. Never create a second profile for the same branch: reviews stay with the original.
3. Created a duplicate by mistake? Contact Google to move the reviews. If two profiles are merged, reviews combine but replies can be lost, so copy your replies first.

Google Business Profile (business.google.com)

2 Keep control

If the one person with access leaves, you can lose your reviews with them.

1. Make a company-controlled Google account the Primary Owner, never a negotiator's personal Gmail.
2. Add at least one other manager, give branch staff only the access they need, and remove leavers the same day.
3. For a group or franchise, agree in writing who owns each branch profile, and make sure head office never creates a second one.
4. Don't create a new profile when a branch moves or rebrands: Google says reviews move with the same profile when the name stays the same.

3 The weekly 15-minute check

1. Read any new reviews and reply to every one without a reply, oldest first (lesson 3.1).
2. Look for reviews that break Google's policy (lesson 3.3).
3. Note the date of the newest review.
4. Confirm opening hours, phone number and photos are current.

4 Know the rules

1. Google bans reviews paid for in money or in kind, several reviews from one person, and reviews from staff, former staff, contractors, competitors and family.
2. It also bans asking only for positive reviews, discouraging negative ones and, since April 2026, asking staff to collect a set number of reviews or reviews that name them.
3. Asking every customer for an honest review, with nothing in return, is allowed.

Google's review policy (support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114?hl=en)

Then: Turn on notifications too (lesson 5.1), so you hear about reviews as they land, not just on check day.

Keep it up

Weekly, at minimum. This is usually your busiest review platform, so it earns the most attention.
(Weekly, about 15 minutes)

Go deeper: Missing, vanished or wrong-profile reviews

• A client says they left a review and you can't see it: ask them to check they're signed in to the right Google Account and look under Your contributions. Check it isn't on another branch. Google's automated checks can hold reviews for a while.

• A review has disappeared: the reviewer may have edited or deleted it, Google may have removed it for a policy breach, or its spam filter may have caught a genuine one by mistake (contact Google support if so).

• Reviews on the wrong profile: look for a duplicate, an old address or a closed branch, and check your review link comes from the right branch.

• Never try to replace missing reviews by asking staff, family or friends to post.

Go deeper: Ask Maps and AI summaries

Google launched Ask Maps, a Gemini chat in Google Maps that draws on reviews, in March 2026 in the US and India. As of October 2026 it wasn't confirmed for the UK. Check on a UK phone from time to time. The only way to influence what these features say is the reviews themselves, and the service behind them.

Sources

1. How UK shoppers check if an online store is legit before purchasing, YouGov, 2025. yougov.com/en-gb/articles/53836-how-uk-shoppers-check-if-an-online-store-is-legit-before-purchasing
2. Consumers fail to check facts and figures when appointing estate agents, HomeOwners Alliance, September 2017. hoa.org.uk/2017/09/consumers-fail-check-facts-figures-when-appointing-estate-agents
3. Tips to improve your local ranking on Google, Google Business Profile Help. support.google.com/business/answer/7091
4. Local Search Ranking Factors 2026, Whitespark, 2026. whitespark.ca/local-search-ranking-factors
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Bing, Apple, Trustpilot, Facebook and the property review sites

Beyond Google, other places show reviews or ratings of your agency: Bing, Apple Maps, Trustpilot, Facebook and review sites made for property. This lesson covers what we know about each, what we don't, and how to keep them current without letting them take over your week.

Priority 8%, How often: about 20 minutes a month, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/other-review-platforms

Why it matters

An abandoned Trustpilot profile or an old Bing listing beside a well-run Google profile reads as inconsistency, and you may have profiles you never set up.

The evidence

Unproven

Official for Trustpilot's rules and Apple's renaming. Secondary sources for Bing, Apple and Facebook. Any ranking effect of these platforms for UK agents is unproven.

Do this first

Search your agency on Bing, Apple Maps, Trustpilot and Facebook, and note the count, rating and newest review on each.

In plain English

Some people ask a neighbour, some read the notice in the library, some check the sign in the shop window. If the library notice is out of date, its readers get the wrong idea about you, however good your shop window is.

A handful of noticeboards around town. You don't need fifty, but the few you keep should all say the same true thing, and none should still advertise last year's event.

Why it matters

Someone searching on Bing, often on a work computer, sees Bing's own picture of you, not a copy of Google's. Many iPhone users search inside Apple Maps or ask Siri and never touch Google. And a buyer or landlord doing real homework often checks more than one source, precisely to see whether the picture holds up.

Buyers: May check Bing or Apple Maps, and notice when platforms disagree.

Tenants: Sometimes use tenant review sites, and Trustpilot.

Sellers: Compare agents on independent review sites, and notice abandoned profiles.

Landlords: Often look for third-party verification beyond Google.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Unproven

Bing doesn't copy your Google reviews: a Microsoft answer (2025) says Bing shows reviews from selected other sites, and a US study found Facebook the most common source. Apple Business (formerly Apple Business Connect) manages your listing details, not reviews; guides disagree on whether UK place cards show third-party ratings, and no Apple documentation says Apple inherits reviews from Yelp or Tripadvisor. Trustpilot says its TrustScore weights newer reviews more heavily. Neither Trustpilot nor Facebook is a direct Google ranking input, but AI assistants often cite review sites when they find them.

An agent example

Larchwyn Lettings had 90 Google reviews and a Trustpilot profile nobody had opened since 2022, with 14 unanswered reviews. A Bing search showed an old phone number, and the Apple Maps card had the right address but little else. The manager claimed Bing Places, updated the Apple listing, cleared the Trustpilot backlog oldest first, and added one tracker row per platform. A 20-minute monthly check keeps them current.

Test it

1 Bing

1. Search your agency name and town on Bing. Is there a listing? Does it show reviews, and from where?
2. Is it current, or clearly abandoned?

Bing Places (www.bingplaces.com)

docs.google.com/spreadsheets/platform-che…

Illustration

Platform	Claimed	Rating	Newest	Next step
Google	Yes	4.6 (96)	4 days ago	Main platform
Bing Places	Yes	Other sites' reviews	n/a	Claimed, details match
Apple Business	Yes	Check your own	n/a	Listing details only
Facebook	No	4.8 (23)	2 months ago	Claim the Page
Trustpilot	No	3.8 (14)	5 weeks ago	Reply to all 14
allAgents	No	4.4 (9)	1 year ago	Leave unless clients use it

The platform check: one row per place your reviews live. Claim what you can, tidy what you've got, and add at most one extra platform. Trustpilot here needs replies before anything else. Made-up agency and figures.

2 Apple Maps

1. Search your agency in Apple Maps on an iPhone or Mac.
2. Check name, address, phone, hours and photos. Note any rating shown and where it says it comes from.

3 Trustpilot and Facebook

1. Search for your agency on Trustpilot, including uk.trustpilot.com/review/ followed by your web address. Is there a profile? Is it claimed? When was the last reply?
2. Open your Facebook Page's Recommendations or reviews tab. Count them, note the newest date and whether you've replied.

4 The property sites

1. Search for your agency on allAgents and GetAgent. Note what exists and who can reply.

allAgents (www.allagents.co.uk)

5 Ask AI

AI prompt

Here are the review counts, ratings and newest review dates for my agency on Google, Bing, Apple Maps, Trustpilot and Facebook, with the same for one local competitor. Where do my platforms disagree with each other, and what would a careful customer make of that? Don't guess beyond the data.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Claim Bing Places and your Facebook Page

1. Both are free. Bing Places can import your details from Google.
2. Make sure Facebook Recommendations are switched on, reply where you can, and flag only genuine policy breaches.

Bing Places (www.bingplaces.com)

2 Correct your Apple listing

1. Use Apple Business to claim your place card and correct your details. It won't give you control over ratings.
2. If a Yelp or Tripadvisor listing for you already exists and shows on your Apple card, claim and tidy it. Don't create one just for Apple: there's no confirmation Apple depends on them.

Apple Business (business.apple.com)

3 Tidy Trustpilot, if you have a profile

1. Claim it, and clear any unanswered reviews oldest first with specific replies.
2. Read its rules before inviting anyone: invite everyone the same way, no incentives, no staff or family. Misuse can lead to a public warning on your profile.
3. There's a free plan; paid plans add more invitations. Only pay if you'll use them.

Trustpilot Business (business.trustpilot.com)

4 Pick at most one extra platform

One well-run platform plus Google beats five neglected ones.

1. Google first, weekly. Then claim and tidy Bing Places and Facebook.
2. Then choose at most one of Trustpilot, Feefo or allAgents, based on where your own clients already look.
3. Check Apple Maps and the property sites for accuracy, but don't chase reviews there.
4. Ask each client once, for one platform, with one link. Asking one client to review on five sites looks like pressure.

5 Never pay for placement

1. Never pay for reviews, ratings or a place in a "best agent" list (lesson 2.3).

Then: Add one row per platform to your tracker, with its count, rating, newest review date, response rate and owner.

Keep it up

Bing, Trustpilot and Facebook roughly monthly. Apple Maps and any Yelp or Tripadvisor listing quarterly. **(about 20 minutes a month)**

Go deeper: How Trustpilot works

Trustpilot says the TrustScore uses only star ratings, gives newer reviews more weight, and starts businesses with few reviews near the middle. Any business with a website can be reviewed, and a profile is created automatically when someone searches for your web address, so check whether one exists. Its rules forbid choosing who to invite, timing invitations so only happy customers get them, screening people first, any incentive, and inviting staff, family or shareholders.

Trustpilot's guidelines for businesses (corporate.trustpilot.com/legal/for-businesses/guidelines-for-businesses)

Go deeper: The property review sites

We found no agent review feature on the portals' agent pages. The sites that carry agent reviews include allAgents, GetAgent, Feefo and View Agents, and they work differently: some verify reviewers, some combine Google reviews with their own, some run awards. In Whito's UK snapshot (August 2026), AI answers cited GetAgent, allAgents and ThreeBestRated, so these sites can matter for AI even if customers rarely visit them.

Sources

1. Apple Business, Apple. business.apple.com
2. Guidelines for businesses, Trustpilot. corporate.trustpilot.com/legal/for-businesses/guidelines-for-businesses
3. Bing Places for Business, Microsoft Bing. bingplaces.com
4. Prohibited and restricted content, Google Maps user contributed content policy. support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114
5. AI estate agent recommendations in six UK cities, Whito, August 2026. whito.co.uk/research/ai-estate-agent-recommendations



05

Monitoring

Hearing about reviews fast, tracking what matters, and checking a rival.

5.1 Instant alerts, and a plan for a bad day
5.2 Response rate, recency and recurring themes
5.3 Checking a named competitor’s reviews

Instant alerts, and a plan for a bad day

Instant alerts mean a new review reaches the right person soon after it's posted, instead of whenever someone next looks. A plan for a bad day means you notice a sudden run of negative reviews, or one serious one, that same day, and you've already decided what to do.

Priority 6%, How often: Set once, test quarterly, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/alerts-and-bad-day-plan

Why it matters

Alerts going to one person's phone, or an inbox nobody checks, and no plan for three bad reviews on a Friday night.

The evidence

Practitioner view ●●●○○

Google's help for the notification settings. The cluster definition and the plan are our recommended practice; no UK study measures how fast agents should respond.

Do this first

Check your Google notifications are on and reaching two named people, then write a one-page bad-day plan.

In plain English

A smoke alarm doesn't put out a fire, but it tells you early enough to do something. If the alarm's in a cupboard nobody opens, it's no use. A review alert has to ring where someone will hear it.

A boiler with a pressure alarm. You hope it never sounds, but you want to know the minute it does, and you've already decided who goes down to the cellar.

Why it matters

The person who left the review doesn't know you haven't seen it. From their side, a slow reply just looks like you don't care. A sudden cluster of bad reviews is a different problem from one waiting for a reply: it usually means something specific went wrong, and it shapes what every new visitor sees right now. In YouGov's 2025 survey, 69% of British adults said mostly negative reviews would put them off.

Buyers: See a sudden run of bad reviews as a red flag, and may choose another agent.

Tenants: Notice clusters about the same problem, such as deposits or repairs.

Sellers: Use recent reviews to decide who to invite, and notice how you respond.

Landlords: Watch how you handle things when they go wrong.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Practitioner view

Alerts aren't a ranking factor. They're what makes fast, considered replies possible. Nobody has published a rating below which Google or an AI assistant stops recommending a business. But a sharp drop changes how a cautious customer reads your profile, and AI tools may repeat what recent reviews say, so catching a problem the same day stops a temporary problem becoming a lasting one.

An agent example

Marrowby Homes got three one-star reviews on a Friday evening, all saying the deposit protection certificate arrived late. The alert reached the lettings manager's phone. She checked the root cause: the person who sends them was off sick. She phoned the tenants on Saturday, posted a short reply to each saying she'd called them, and fixed the cover rota on Monday.

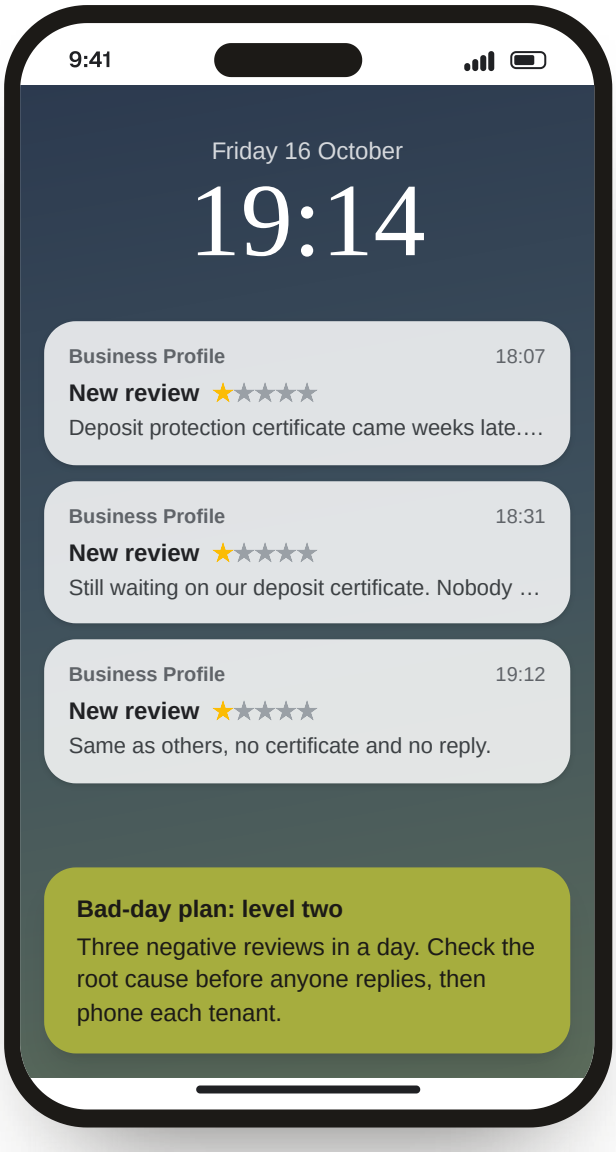
Test it

1 Check Google's alerts

1. At business.google.com, go to More, then Notifications. Check review alerts are on and going to someone who'll see them.
2. In the Google Maps app, tap Business, then the notifications icon, and check the same.

Google: notification settings (support.google.com/business/answer/7198436?hl=en)

Illustration



A bad Friday evening, as the lettings manager's phone sees it. Because alerts go to two people, someone knows within minutes, and the bad-day plan says what happens next. Made-up reviews.

2 Time your next alert

1. When your next genuine review arrives, compare when it was posted with when your alert arrived.
2. Never post a test review yourself: that would be a fake review.

3 The fire drill

1. Imagine three one-star reviews landed today. Who would find out, who would reply, when would you phone, and where is the evidence kept?
2. Write down every gap.

4 Ask AI

AI prompt

Here is my draft same-day plan for a cluster of negative reviews at an estate agency, with no real names in it. What's missing? Which step is most likely to fail on a busy day? Don't invent facts.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Point alerts at two people

1. Turn on review notifications on every platform you manage (Google, Trustpilot and Facebook each have their own settings).
2. Send them to the person who owns replies and a named deputy, through the shared inbox from lesson 1.3.
3. Add an email rule that forwards review alerts to a phone or team channel, and re-check it after any app or password change.

2 Decide what counts as a bad day

Our rule, not an industry standard. Adapt it to your size.

1. Level one: two or more 1 or 2-star reviews within seven days on any platform, or the same specific complaint twice within 30 days.
2. Level two: three negative reviews in a day, or any review alleging dishonesty, discrimination, a safety problem or a legal claim, or any sign a journalist or competitor is involved.

3 Write the one-page plan

1. Who's alerted (the reply owner, the deputy and the branch or group manager).
2. Who investigates first, who replies publicly and by when (lessons 3.1 and 3.2), and when a phone call beats a public reply.
3. When to escalate to a director, a solicitor or your redress scheme, and where the evidence log lives.
4. Print it, and keep it with your complaints policy.

4 Check the root cause before you reply

1. Did a key person leave or go on leave? Did a fee, holding deposit or inspection policy change?
2. Did a portal, phone line or web form go down? Was there a delayed completion or missed repair?
3. Do the reviews mention the same property, landlord or person?
4. Several reviews close together can also be fake (lesson 3.3). Check whether the reviewers have any record with you before deciding.

Then: Test your alerts each quarter by checking you heard about your latest genuine review. Re-read the plan twice a year, or after a staff change.

Keep it up

Set alerts and the plan once. Test alerts quarterly; re-read the plan twice a year. **(Set once, test quarterly)**

Go deeper: A wider net, and paid tools

A free Google Alert for your agency and branch names catches mentions in news, blogs and forums, but not reviews inside Google Maps. For several branches or platforms, paid tools such as Grade.us, BrightLocal or Birdeye send alerts from many platforms to one place. Check what each covers and its current price, and keep a person approving every public reply.

Sources

1. How UK shoppers check if an online store is legit before purchasing, YouGov, 2025. yougov.com/en-gb/articles/53836-how-uk-shoppers-check-if-an-online-store-is-legit-before-purchasing
2. Local Consumer Review Survey 2026, BrightLocal, 2026. brightlocal.com/research/local-consumer-review-survey

Response rate, recency and recurring themes

Three monthly numbers and one habit. Response rate is the share of your reviews with a reply from you. Recency is how recent your reviews are, not just how many you have. Recurring themes are the same specific issue coming up more than once when you read your reviews as a set.

Priority 8%, How often: about 15 minutes a month, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/response-rate-recency-themes

Why it matters

A high star rating feels like the job's done, while replies quietly lapse, reviews dry up and the same complaint keeps coming back.

The evidence

Study ●●●●○

Surveys (YouGov, GB; BrightLocal, US) for recency mattering. Expert opinion (Whitespark) for ranking. The targets, formula and tagging method are our recommended practice.

Do this first

Count your last 20 reviews: how many have a reply, how many came in the last three months, and what repeats.

In plain English

A teacher who reads one pupil's homework at a time can't see that half the class got the same sum wrong. Reading the whole pile together shows the pattern, and then the teacher can fix the lesson.

A monthly check of a car. Oil, tyres and lights seldom show anything dramatic, but it stops a small fault becoming a breakdown on the motorway.

There's a live demo of this on the website: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/response-rate-recency-themes

Why it matters

Most owners think they're more on top of replies than they are. A business with 200 reviews from three years ago and nothing since reads as coasting on old goodwill, however strong the old rating. In YouGov's 2025 survey, 49% of British adults said recency matters; in BrightLocal's 2026 US survey, 74% only cared about reviews from the last three months. And by the time a complaint is public, it may already have happened more than once in private.

Buyers: Notice unanswered reviews, old profiles and themes about viewings and communication.

Tenants: Look for repeated complaints about deposits, repairs and move-in.

Sellers: Look for communication, honest valuations and how problems were handled.

Landlords: Look for rent collection, repairs and clear fees.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Study

Google doesn't publish a recency rule. In Whitespark's 2026 expert survey, recency ranked 11th and a steady flow of reviews rather than bursts 14th, while replying ranked 122nd, so treat response rate as a process-health number customers can see, not a ranking lever. A sudden burst of reviews can also look like manipulation, which is another reason a steady flow is safer than a one-day drive. Trustpilot weights newer reviews more heavily, and AI tools may summarise your recurring themes, so what customers repeat tends to be what's repeated back.

An agent example

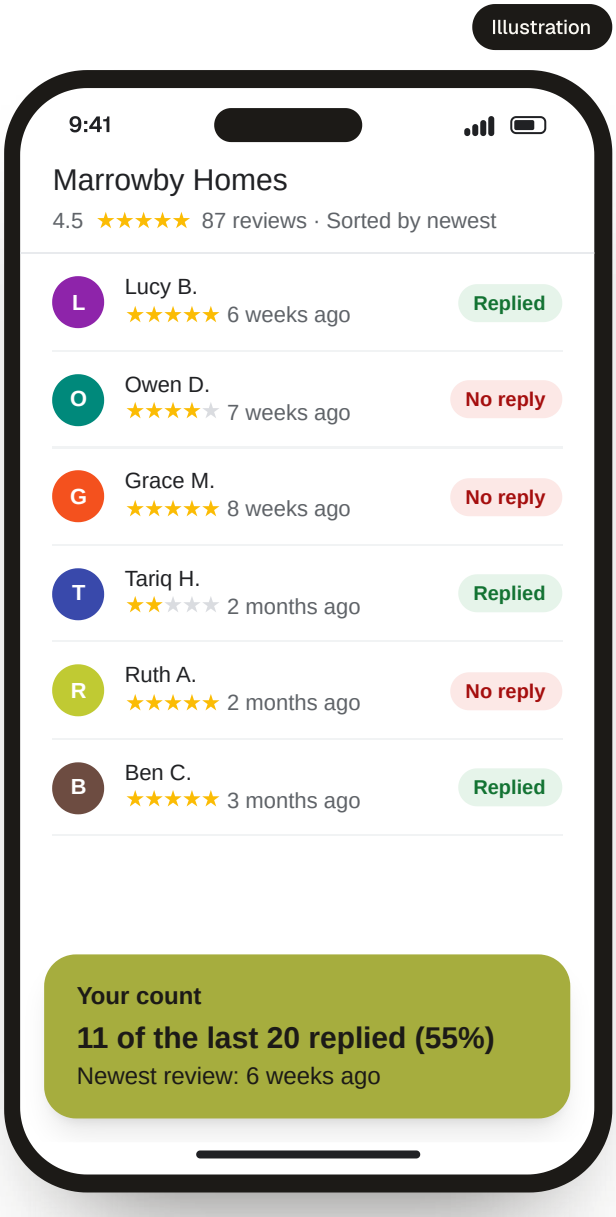
Marrowby Homes counted its last 20 Google reviews: 11 had a reply (55%), and the newest was six weeks old. It cleared the backlog oldest first, then found the request email had stopped going to lettings move-ins after a CRM change. Reading the 20 reviews together showed three landlords mentioning slow repair updates, so the branch added a weekly update email for open repairs.

Test it

1 Response rate

1. Count your last 20 Google reviews and how many have a reply. Divide by 20 and multiply by 100.
2. Repeat for each other platform in your tracker.

Google Business Profile (business.google.com)



The count, done on your phone in five minutes: your last 20 reviews, newest first. Write down how many have a reply and how old the newest one is. Those two numbers are your baseline. Made-up agency and reviews.

2 Recency

1. Note the date of your newest review.
2. Count how many arrived in the last three months, separately from your all-time total.

3 Themes

1. Reread your last 15 to 20 reviews together.
2. Note anything mentioned more than once, even in passing: a delay, a communication gap, a named member of staff.

4 Ask AI

AI prompt

Here are 20 reviews of an estate agency with all names, addresses, property details and staff names removed. Group them into recurring themes by audience (seller, landlord, tenant, buyer), say which are positive and which negative, and quote the exact words for each theme. Don't invent anything that isn't in the text.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Aim for every review answered

1. Target: a reply to every review, most within hours and none waiting longer than 24 to 48 hours. Our practice, not a rule.
2. Clear any backlog first, then make replying a fixed step in your weekly routine (lesson 4.1).

2 Judge recency against your completions

Expected reviews a month = completions (or new tenancies) × the share you ask × the share who review.

1. Say a branch completes 30 transactions a month, asks everyone, and 1 in 10 reviews: about 3 a month. (The 1 in 10 is invented for the sum; measure your own over three months.)
2. If your newest review is over a month old and you complete several deals a month, it's usually a request problem, not bad luck (lessons 2.1 and 2.2).
3. Fix the request process, never with a one-day burst.
4. Track the last three months as your health number: the all-time total only ever goes up.

3 Tag themes every month

1. Tag each review with the audience, positive, mixed or negative, and one or two themes.
2. Starter themes. Sellers: communication, valuation accuracy, marketing and viewings, fees, sales progress. Landlords: repairs, rent collection, fees, communication. Tenants: deposits, repairs, communication, move-in and move-out. Buyers: viewings, honesty, updates.
3. A pattern means at least two reviews with the same specific issue, not one loud review.

4 Turn themes into fixes

1. The review is the symptom; the pattern is the problem. Give each pattern an owner and a process change, such as a weekly repair update or a call after an offer is accepted.
2. Reply publicly with the facts of what changed, without personal details.
3. Reflect real fixes on your website, such as a clearer process page (SEO 6.3).

5 Write a one-page monthly report

1. Rating and count on each platform, with the change since last month.
2. Response rate and the slowest reply. Reviews in the last three months against completions.
3. The top three themes with example quotes (names removed). Two actions, with owners and dates. Anything flagged, reported or escalated.

Then: Count these at a set time each month, about 15 minutes, with a named owner and deputy. Read themes in more depth each quarter.

Keep it up

Monthly: response rate, recency and themes together. A deeper read of themes each quarter. **(about 15 minutes a month)**

Go deeper: Where UK complaints cluster

Complaint data hints at where to look. The Property Ombudsman's 2024 figures made lettings the most complained-about sector, with repairs, deposits and poor complaint handling as themes. The Property Redress Scheme's 2025 report named holding deposits as the leading lettings complaint and commission disputes in sales. And a 2017 government survey found sellers least satisfied with being kept informed. None of these analyse review text, but they suggest where your themes may be.

Sources

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3. Local Search Ranking Factors 2026, Whitespark, 2026. whitespark.ca/local-search-ranking-factors
4. Codes of practice, The Property Ombudsman. tpos.co.uk

Checking a named competitor's reviews

Every quarter, look at exactly what one local competitor is doing with their reviews: not to copy them, but to find the single gap worth closing first. Pick one genuine rival, compare the same few numbers, and choose one thing to fix.

Priority 5%, How often: about 1 hour a quarter, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/competitor-review-check

Why it matters

Without a real comparison you work through a generic checklist, when the agency down the road may be weak somewhere you could win quickly.

The evidence

Practitioner view

Practitioner view and common sense. No study measures the effect of checking a competitor.

Do this first

Pick the agency you most often lose valuations to, and compare your last 20 reviews with theirs.

In plain English

If you and a friend both sell lemonade, you could guess how to do better. Or you could walk past their stall and see it has no sign and nobody answering questions. Now you know exactly what to fix on yours.

Checking the fastest local runner's lap times before a race. You're not copying their stride; you want to see which part of the track they lose time on.

Why it matters

A seller or landlord choosing between you and the agency down the road compares exactly what you're about to compare: rating, count, how recent the reviews are, whether the agent replies, and what reviewers say. They often invite two or three agents, so a rival's fresher or better-answered reviews may decide who gets the valuation.

Buyers: May compare you with the agency down the road on the same few numbers, in the same few minutes.

Tenants: Compare how each agent answers complaints about deposits and repairs.

Sellers: Often invite two or three agents, and compare their reviews first.

Landlords: Compare repairs, rent collection and replies between agents.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Practitioner view

Not a ranking factor: a research habit that tells you what to fix first. Competitors' Google reviews, ratings and replies are public in Maps. Bing may show different reviews from different sources, so check it separately. AI answers about two named agencies differ between assistants and runs: in Whito's UK snapshot (August 2026), only 37% of the agencies named appeared in more than one AI tool's answers. If an assistant can't find recent information about either of you, that's the gap.

An agent example

Copperleaf Lettings compared itself with Kettlewyn Properties, the agency it most often met at landlord valuations. Larkhill had more reviews, but 11 of its last 20 had no reply and its newest was five weeks old. Manchester replied to all of its reviews. Asked to compare the two, an AI assistant could only find recent information on Larkhill. Manchester's biggest gap wasn't its count but its unclaimed Trustpilot profile, so it claimed it and linked it in its requests.

Test it

1 Choose your competitor

1. In Google Maps, search "estate agents in [town]" and "letting agents in [town]".
2. Pick the agency that appears next to you, or the one you most often lose valuations to.

docs.google.com/spreadsheets/competitor-c... Illustration

Measure	Manchester (you)	Larkhill
Google reviews, all time	64	**212**
Reviews in the last 3 months	**11**	2
Rating	**4.6**	4.4
Newest review	**4 days ago**	5 weeks ago
Last 20 with a reply	**20**	9
Reply style	**Specific**	Copy and paste
Top complaint	Repair updates	Hard to reach

Biggest gap to close

Repair updates: weekly email, owner Megan, by 1 Dec

One named rival, the same numbers for both. They have more reviews, but recency and replies matter more. The gap worth closing is the one in the bottom row: what local clients complain about. Made-up agencies and figures.

2 Compare the same numbers

1. For both of you, on the platforms you share: review count (all time and the last three months), average rating with its count, newest review date, share of the last 20 with a reply, typical reply speed, and whether replies are specific or generic.
2. Read their last 20 reviews and note the top three praise and complaint themes.

3 Ask the AI tools

1. Run it three times in a private window, and check every claim against the real profiles. AI can get ratings and counts wrong.

AI prompt

Compare the reputation of [your agency] and [competitor] in [town]. What do customers say? Say which sources you used, and tell me if you can't find recent information.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Read the results the right way

1. Recency and replies before count: a rival with 800 reviews and none in six months is less of a threat than one with 90 reviews and 12 in the last three months.
2. Their complaint themes show what local clients complain about. Make sure your own service and reviews answer that theme honestly.
3. Don't build an advert on a rival's complaints: the ASA upheld complaints in June 2026 against an estate agent's comparisons with named competitors that it couldn't back up.

2 Close the single biggest gap

1. Response rate: clear the backlog and set the reply routine (lesson 3.1).
2. Recency: fix the request process so every client is asked within 24 hours (lesson 2.1). No one-day bursts.
3. Platform coverage: claim the missing profile (lesson 4.2).
4. Themes: fix the service behind the theme (lesson 5.2). AI answers: work on consistency (lesson 6.1).
5. Write the gap in one sentence, with an owner and a date.

3 What never to do

1. Don’t scrape their reviews against a platform’s terms.
2. Don’t post, or ask anyone to post, reviews about them: it breaks Google’s policy and the law on fake reviews.
3. Don’t contact their reviewers, copy their replies, or describe their reviews inaccurately.

Then: Keep the same competitor for a year, in the same sheet, so you see movement rather than noise.

Keep it up

Quarterly. Competitor positions don’t shift week to week. **(about 1 hour a quarter)**

Sources

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06

Using your reviews

How reviews feed local results and AI answers, and showing them honestly.

6.1 Reviews, local rankings and AI answers

6.2 Showing reviews on your website and in marketing

Reviews, local rankings and AI answers

What happens to your reviews after customers write them. They may help decide where you appear in local results, and AI assistants may repeat a rating, a count or a theme when someone asks “Who is the best estate agent in [town]?” This lesson covers what the evidence says, and how to make your real rating and count read the same everywhere a person or an AI might look.

Priority 8%, How often: about 1 hour a quarter, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/reviews-rankings-and-ai

Why it matters

Your website says one rating, Google another and Trustpilot a third, and an AI assistant picks whichever it finds.

The evidence

Study ●●●●○

Google’s official statements on ranking and markup. Expert opinion (Whitespark) and vendor studies, correlation only. How much reviews affect ranking or AI answers for UK agents is unproven.

Do this first

Make a review facts sheet: each platform’s rating, count and the date you checked. Quote only those figures.

In plain English

A new pupil asks a helpful robot which after-school club is best. The robot can’t walk the corridors; it can only read the noticeboards it finds. If your club’s good marks are on one board and the others show old or different numbers, the robot repeats whatever it read.

A shop whose sign, window poster and delivery van all show different phone numbers. People trust whichever they see first, and the odd one out makes them doubt all three.

Why it matters

Someone who asks ChatGPT or Gemini who to trust usually never opens your Google profile: the assistant answers from what it can find. A seller choosing between three agents is likely to be reassured by recent, specific, honestly answered reviews. A UK vendor study (Trusted Agent, June 2026) found agents rated 4.5 or above completed about 2.3 times as many sales, but that shows the two go together, not that reviews caused it. You don’t need a perfect score: Google’s own advice says a mix of positive and negative reviews looks more trustworthy.

Buyers: May ask an assistant which agent to trust, and see a rating and a few themes before visiting your site.

Tenants: Ask AI tools about agents, and see whatever figures the tool found.

Sellers: Use AI answers and the map to shortlist who to invite for a valuation.

Landlords: Notice when the numbers differ between platforms.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Study

Google says more reviews and positive ratings can help local ranking, gives no numbers, and doesn't say replies are a ranking factor. Whitespark's 2026 expert survey ranked a high rating, review volume and recency highly, and replies low. On review markup, Google's rules are clear: a page about a business that controls its own reviews can't get review stars in search, even through a widget, and you mustn't mark up reviews collected from other sites. No AI company has said it uses review markup. Assistants read the pages and profiles they find, and in Whito's UK snapshot (August 2026) they quoted ratings and counts, and cited GetAgent, allAgents and ThreeBestRated.

An agent example

Glimmerford Homes had 96 Google reviews at 4.6, 14 Trustpilot reviews at 3.8 with no replies, and a website banner saying "Rated 4.9 by 150 clients" from a 2022 widget. Asked "Is Glimmerford Homes any good?", two assistants quoted the Trustpilot figure and one quoted the banner. The branch made a review facts sheet, replaced the banner with a dated line matching Google ("4.6 from 96 Google reviews, checked 14 October 2026"), replied to the Trustpilot reviews, and started asking every client through one routine.

Test it

1 Search yourself

1. In a private window, search your agency name, then "[agency] reviews" and "[agency] reviews [town]".
2. Note the stars and counts shown, and compare them with your live profiles.

Google: how local ranking works (support.google.com/business/answer/7091?hl=en)

docs.google.com/spreadsheets/review-facts

Illustration

Where	What it says	Matches?
Google (checked 14 Oct)	4.6 from 96 reviews	Yes
Trustpilot	3.8 from 14, no replies	Yes
Facebook	4.8 from 23	Yes
Website banner (2022 widget)	“Rated 4.9 by 150 clients”	No
ChatGPT	“3.8 on Trustpilot”	Yes
Gemini	“4.9 from 150 clients”	No

Quote only the platform figures, with the count and the date you checked.

The review facts sheet: what each platform really says, then what your website and the AI assistants repeat. The old banner is the source of the wrong figure, so that’s the one to fix. Made-up agency and figures.

2 Ask the AI assistants

1. In a private window, ask ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, Perplexity and Claude: “Who is the best estate agent in [town]?”, “Who is the best letting agent in [town]?”, “Is [agency] any good?” and “Are [agency] reviews real?”
2. Run each three times. Record whether you were named, any rating or count, the themes and the sources cited.
3. The GEO course explains how to test AI fairly (GEO 2.3).

GEO 2.3: Testing and your baseline (/geocourse/testing-and-baseline)

3 The consistency table

1. One row per platform (Google, Bing, Trustpilot, Facebook, any property site): rating, count and newest review date.
2. Add a row for what your website says, and one for what each AI answer said. Mark every mismatch.

4 Check for markup

1. Run your homepage, reviews page and valuation page through the Rich Results Test.
2. Note any review or rating markup, who added it (a plugin, a widget, a developer) and whether its figures match the visible page.

Rich Results Test (search.google.com/test/rich-results)

Fix it

1 Keep one review facts sheet

1. Each platform's rating and count, with the date you checked.
2. Quote only figures from that sheet, with the date, on your website, in adverts and in emails.
3. Replace anything you can't prove with a link to the platform profile.

2 Make the details match everywhere

1. Use the same agency and branch names on every profile so reviews attach to the right business (SEO 3.4).
2. Reply on every platform you use, so each has recent, answered reviews (lesson 4.2).
3. Put a short reviews page on your site with real quotes and a dated rating line, in plain text any reader or AI can use (lesson 6.2).

3 Treat markup as optional and low priority

Don't expect star snippets for your own reviews. The stars beside your name come from your Google profile.

1. If a plugin has added review markup about your own business, ask your developer to remove or correct it.
2. If you use markup at all, it must describe real reviews visible on that page, with matching figures, and nothing collected from other sites.

Google: review snippet rules (developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/structured-data/review-snippet), GEO 4.2: Structured data (/geocourse/structured-data)

4 Don’t game it

1. Never ask clients to include words in a review: Google bans requesting specific content, and the CMA says you mustn’t decide what a review will say.
2. In replies, mention the branch or area only where it’s natural. Never stuff keywords.
3. No one-day review drives, bought or swapped reviews, staff reviews or gating.
4. Never remove honest mixed reviews, and never chase 5.0.

Then: Run the AI check and re-check your quoted figures every quarter, and after any big batch of new reviews.

Keep it up

Quarterly: the AI check and a check of every figure you publish. **(about 1 hour a quarter)**

Go deeper: What the AI studies say (none are UK property studies)

A few studies hint at a link between reviews on well-known platforms and being found by AI tools. Insites (2026, US local businesses) found businesses surfaced by both ChatGPT and Perplexity averaged far more Google reviews than those surfaced by neither. Seer Interactive (2026, promoted by Trustpilot) found brands with even a small Trustpilot profile were cited far more often than brands with none. All are correlations, and busy businesses may simply have more of everything. They suggest having real reviews on well-known platforms matters, not how much, or why.

Go deeper: Is a perfect 5.0 a problem?

A Northwestern University study of product purchases found buying peaked at ratings around 4.2 to 4.5 stars rather than 5.0, and in YouGov’s 2025 survey 64% of British adults said fake or overly positive reviews would put them off. There’s no UK evidence about agents, and Whito saw AI tools recommend an agency with a 5.0 rating. The lesson is simple: never remove honest mixed reviews, and never chase a perfect score.

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Showing reviews on your website and in marketing

Showing your reviews on your own website, in adverts, on social media and in property marketing: a quote on a valuation page, a live widget, a rating line on a leaflet, a screenshot in a post. What the rules say, what Google does and doesn't do with embedded reviews, and how to choose a widget.

Priority 5%, How often: about 15 minutes a month, Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/showing-reviews-on-your-website

Why it matters

Old five-star slideshows beside "Rated 5.0", when Google shows 4.6, are a trust problem and, under UK law, a legal one.

The evidence

Official guidance ●●●●●

The DMCC Act and CMA guidance, the CAP Code and ASA advice, and Google's review snippet rules. Widget speed and prices are vendor claims only.

Do this first

Compare every rating and quote on your site with your live profiles, and note any that are old, unsourced or one-sided.

In plain English

A bakery puts a sign in the window saying "Everyone loves our cakes". If it only hangs up the nice notes, or shows notes from three years ago as if they were today's, people feel tricked when they walk in. Showing the sign is fine. Showing it fairly is the rule.

A shop window. You can choose a tidy display, but you can't paint over the crack or show last year's prices as today's.

Why it matters

Visitors compare what you say with what they've seen on Google. In YouGov's 2025 survey, 54% of British adults said a mix of positive and negative reviews matters, and only 26% read reviews on a seller's own website (61% use sites like Trustpilot). There's no independent UK study showing reviews on an agent's website increase enquiries, so keep it honest and simple.

Buyers: Check that the reviews on your site match what's on Google.

Tenants: Look for how you handle problems, not just praise.

Sellers: Look for proof near the valuation form, and are put off if it looks too perfect.

Landlords: Want landlord reviews on landlord pages, not a seller's quote.

To Google, the platforms and AI, Official guidance

Showing reviews on your site doesn't earn a search feature: Google won't show review stars for a business's own reviews of itself, even through a third-party widget. Google says it tries to link content in an embedded frame to the page that shows it, but not always, so a review inside a widget may not be read as part of your page by Google or by AI tools. Put your key quotes in plain text and treat a widget as a display tool, not an SEO tool.

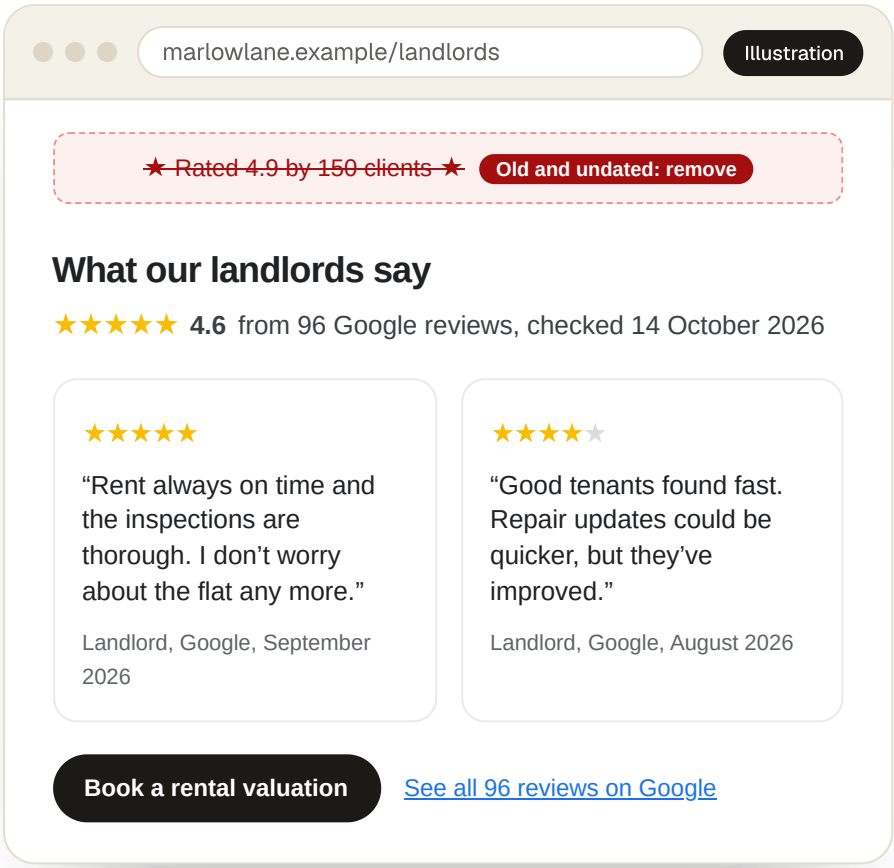
An agent example

Brookfield and Pellinore Lettings showed a slideshow of eight five-star quotes, with first names and photos, mostly from 2021, beside "Rated 5.0". Its Google profile showed 4.6 and several three-star reviews, and one slide was a landlord's comment on a page for tenants. It replaced the slideshow with two recent quotes per audience, asked each named person for permission, showed "4.6 from 212 Google reviews, 14 October 2026" with a link, and kept the originals on file.

Test it

1 Audit every quote and rating

1. For each review shown on your site, note its date, platform, whether you have permission, and whether it suits the page's audience.
2. Compare any overall rating with your live profile.



An honest reviews section on a landlord page: a dated rating that names the platform and count, landlord quotes with their dates, a mixed one included, and a link to the full profile. The old undated banner comes down. Made-up agency and reviews.

2 The fair-mix check

1. Count the negative and mixed reviews shown on your site against your profile.
2. If your site shows none and your profile shows several, you may be giving a misleading picture.

3 Check outside your website

1. List every other place a rating or quote appears: window cards, brochures, email footers, social posts, adverts. Check each for a date, a source and evidence.

4 Test any widget

1. Run the page through PageSpeed Insights on mobile, with and without the widget if you can.
2. A widget that slows the page may cost more than it earns.

PageSpeed Insights (pagespeed.web.dev)

5 Ask AI

AI prompt
Here are the testimonials and rating line on my estate agency website, with names removed. List any that could be misleading because they're out of date, unevidenced, not relevant to the page, cherry-picked or missing a source. Don't give legal advice; I'll check each.

ChatGPT (chatgpt.com), Claude (claude.ai)

Fix it

1 Show a true, dated overall figure

1. Name the platform, the count and the date with the rating: "4.6 from 96 Google reviews, 14 October 2026", with a link to the profile.
2. Show a fair mix of recent, genuine quotes. Never show only five-star quotes and call it your rating.
3. Don't edit a review beyond an obvious typo, and never delete a genuine negative one from a page you control.

2 Get permission and keep evidence

1. Ask before using a client's name, photo or street, say where it'll appear, and take it down if they ask.
2. Keep the originals, dates and permissions in an evidence file.
3. Only use reviews from genuine clients, never staff, family or friends.

ASA: testimonials and endorsements (www.asa.org.uk/advice-online/testimonials-and-endorsements.html)

3 Match the review to the page

1. Seller reviews on valuation pages, landlord reviews on landlord pages, tenant reviews on tenancy pages. A landlord's quote on a seller page can mislead.
2. One or two relevant quotes beside a call to action usually work better than thirty. Link to your full profile for the rest.

4 Choose the simplest honest display

1. A handwritten reviews page with a few real quotes and a dated rating line is often the cheapest and safest choice for a small agency.
2. If you use a widget (Trustpilot's TrustBox, a Google reviews widget, or one from your CRM supplier), choose one that shows the platform, the date and the full rating, and test its speed.
3. A Google reviews widget may show only a handful of reviews, and not your newest, so your page can look different from your profile.

5 Careful with claims in adverts

1. "Best", "No. 1" and "top rated" need evidence (GEO 7.3).
2. Don't crop a screenshot to hide a lower score or an older date.
3. Don't use a platform's badge unless it's current and the platform allows it.

Then: Check your reviews page and quoted figures monthly alongside your numbers, refresh dated figures at least quarterly, and re-check after any redesign or new plugin.

Keep it up

Monthly glance, quarterly refresh of dated figures. **(about 15 minutes a month)**

Go deeper: The rules, briefly

• UK law (DMCC Act): publishing reviews, ratings or counts in a misleading way is banned, and so is publishing reviews without taking reasonable steps to keep fake and hidden-incentive ones out. A widget doesn't move that responsibility to someone else.

• No cherry-picking: Trading Standards' Business Companion lists suppressing negative reviews and cherry-picking good ones as misleading. Keep reviews relevant and not out of date.

• The CAP Code: hold evidence that testimonials are genuine (rule 3.47), make sure they relate to the service advertised (3.48), don't let them mislead (3.49), and get permission (3.50).

CMA fake reviews guidance (www.gov.uk/government/publications/fake-reviews), ASA: testimonials and endorsements (www.asa.org.uk/advice-online/testimonials-and-endorsements.html)

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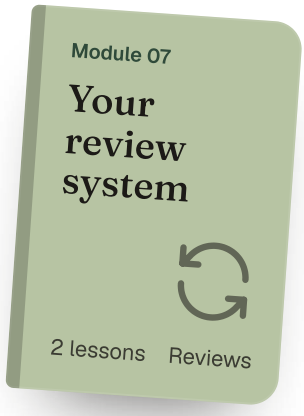
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07

Your review system

Turning it all into a weekly routine, then your audit and 90-day plan.

7.1 The review operating system: roles, routines and scripts

7.2 Your audit, priorities and 90-day plan

The review operating system: roles, routines and scripts

Review management isn't fourteen separate jobs. It's one loop: ask every client, reply to every review, handle the difficult ones properly, run the platforms that count, watch the numbers, and use what you learn. It repeats every week, month and quarter, and it works when someone owns each part.

Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/review-operating-system

In plain English

A kitchen runs because everyone knows their station: who preps, who cooks, who plates, who checks every dish before it goes out. Review management is the same. Write down the stations, and nothing gets missed when it's busy.

There's a live demo of this on the website: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/review-operating-system

The loop

Step	The question	Where
1. Ask	Do we ask every client, at one set moment, within 24 hours, with one easy link and one reminder?	Module 2
2. Reply	Is every review answered promptly, in our own voice, without personal data?	3.1
3. Handle	Do we have a process for negative, fake and legal cases, and a rule against incentives and gating?	2.3, 3.2, 3.3
4. Cover	Do we run Google properly every week and the other platforms lightly?	Module 4
5. Watch	Do we hear about reviews the same day, count our numbers monthly and check a rival quarterly?	Module 5
6. Use	Do our website, marketing and AI answers reflect our real reviews?	Module 6
7. Fix	What's the next change, and who owns it?	7.2

Asking comes first because without a steady flow of genuine reviews there's nothing to reply to or measure. In practice you'll work on several steps at once; the loop tells you where to look first when something goes wrong.

Who does what

Role	What they do	Suggested owner
Review owner	Runs the system, owns the policy and the monthly report	Marketing lead, office manager or a director
Branch champion	Does the weekly Google check, makes sure requests go out, drafts replies	Branch manager, one per branch
Reply approver	Reads every reply before it's posted and checks it has no personal data	Branch manager or director
Escalation lead	Handles negative clusters, suspected fakes, legal letters and formal complaints	Director or compliance lead
Account owner	Holds every platform login in the company's name, and adds and removes access	Director, with IT or the web supplier
Data protection contact	Request wording, opt-outs, the privacy notice and data requests	Whoever handles data protection

A small agency has the same jobs with fewer people. One person may wear four hats; just write down which hat covers what.

Every routine from the course, from the daily reply check to the twice-yearly policy review, is in one printable schedule.

Get the reviews schedule

Your one-page review policy

Write one page, have a director sign it off, and give a copy to everyone who touches reviews. Ask a qualified professional to check it once. It should say:

- What we ask and when, and that we ask every client in the same way.
- That we never offer anything for a review, never choose who's asked by how happy we think they are, and never ask staff, family or friends to review.
- How quickly we reply, and who approves replies.

- What a reply must never contain: personal data, allegations, fee details, tenant details.
- The negative review process, who owns it, and when we move a conversation offline.
- How we report suspected fake reviews.
- Who holds each login, how we record requests, replies and complaints, and how we handle data protection requests.

Training your team (30 minutes)

- The rules: no quotas, no scripts or suggested wording, no staff or family reviews, no asking only happy clients, no requests during a dispute or deposit disagreement, and no asking clients to name a colleague.
- Role-play the face-to-face line: “Once everything’s complete we’ll email you a short link. If you’d like to share your experience, we’d really appreciate honest feedback, whatever it is.”
- Three example replies: a five-star review, a mixed one and a complaint.
- How to pass a complaint to the escalation lead.

Every script, ready to copy

Request messages for sellers, landlords, tenants and buyers, the single reminder, reply templates for every star rating, the holding reply and the move-offline line are in the free request and reply templates. The escalation note is in the negative review process sheet.

See the downloads

The 15-minute weekly meeting

- New reviews and replies.

- Anything negative or odd.
- Requests sent, and any missed.
- One fix from the themes.
- Anything the review owner needs to know.

Holidays, leavers and records

- Write a rota so the shared inbox and the Google check are covered when the usual person is away.
- When someone leaves, remove their access the same day, change shared passwords, check they weren't the Primary Owner of any profile, and reassign their replies. Don't delete reviews that mention them.
- Keep the request log, the review log, who approved each reply, and a record of every complaint and escalation. The Property Ombudsman's lettings code asks for complaint records to be kept for six years.
- Each branch has its own profile, review link, log and champion. A group sets the naming pattern, the shared policy and who owns each profile. Never copy one branch's replies onto another.

Tools by size

Agency	What's enough
One branch	The free stack: a Google review link and QR code per branch, a Google Sheet for your logs and monthly view, a shared inbox, Google Alerts, and an AI assistant for drafts with a person approving every reply (lesson 1.3).
A few branches	Add automated requests from your CRM so they don't rely on memory (some, like Street, have this built in), or a tool such as Reviewflowz that connects to some property CRMs. Add a simple dashboard.
A larger group	A platform with reporting across branches, such as Grade.us or Birdeye. Check CRM links, contract length and who owns the data before signing.

Most of this course is staff time, not spend. Consider paid software only once you have a baseline and a routine it would genuinely save time on. Check current prices on each tool's own site.

Choosing a review provider

Nobody can honestly guarantee reviews, ratings, rankings or AI mentions, and that includes us. Before you sign with any tool, agency or freelancer, ask:

- What exactly will you do each month? Get it in writing.
- How do you ask for reviews? It should ask every client, with the same wording, and no step that steers unhappy clients away from the public review.
- Who writes and who approves the replies? A person at your agency should approve every one, including any drafted by AI.
- Whose name are the accounts in? You should own your Google profile, your review accounts, your domain and your data. The provider is added as a user.
- Does it link to our CRM, from which trigger, and does it log every send?
- What does reporting show? Response rate, reviews in the last three months, rating by platform, themes and reply times, by branch.
- What's the contract length, notice period and cancellation cost, and what costs extra?

Walk away if you see

Guaranteed reviews, ratings or rankings. A "were you happy?" screen before the review link. Discounts, vouchers or prize draws for reviews. Fake, bought, staff-written or AI-written reviews. Offers to remove genuine negative reviews or bury them. Long contracts with high exit fees. A provider who wants sole ownership of your profiles. Replies posted without anyone at your agency approving them.

When something goes wrong: the first thing to check

Symptom	First check
Few new reviews	The request flow, the trigger and who's being missed (lessons 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4)

Symptom	First check
A falling rating	Your last 20 reviews for a repeated theme, and a negative cluster (lessons 5.1 and 5.2), then the service behind it
Reviews missing or disappeared	Duplicate profiles, edits by the reviewer, and Google's removal routes (lessons 4.1 and 3.3)
AI says wrong or old things about your reviews	Your review facts sheet and the figures on your website (lesson 6.1), then GEO 8.3 on correcting AI answers
Good reviews but few valuation requests	How reviews are shown near your valuation form (lesson 6.2), and GEO 9.2 on speed to lead
A competitor looks stronger	A like-for-like comparison (lesson 5.3)
A tenant's hostile review	Is there something fair in it? Is it really about the landlord's decision? Holding reply, offline, complaints procedure (lesson 3.2)
Your Google profile is suspended or you've lost access	Who's the Primary Owner? Contact Google support, and don't create a new profile (lesson 4.1)

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Your audit, priorities and 90-day plan

Pulling the course together: score your agency against every check, sort what you find by priority, and turn it into a 90-day plan with owners and dates. Then measure progress honestly, without fooling yourself.

Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/audit-and-90-day-plan

In plain English

Before a long journey you check the car, decide what has to be fixed before you set off, and plan the route. This is the check, the list and the route.

There's a live demo of this on the website: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/audit-and-90-day-plan

The reviews audit has a check for every lesson, each linked to the lesson that explains it. Tick Yes, Partly or No, see a score for each part of the course, and whatever you haven't done yet turns into a 90-day plan in priority order. It's saved in your browser and prints on a few pages.

Open the reviews audit

The four priorities

Priority	What it means	Examples
1. Critical: fix now	Breaks the law or a platform's rules, exposes personal data, or means you can't control your profiles	Incentives or gating; asking only happy clients; staff or fake reviews; a misleading rating on your website; personal data in a reply; no company-owned login; a clause stopping reviews
2. High impact	Affects most clients or most readers	No consistent request; a reply backlog; no negative review process; no alerts; different figures on each platform; no permission for named testimonials
3. Growth	Raises the quality of your reputation	Theme fixes, a second platform, AI checks, the competitor check, a dated reviews page, a monthly report
4. Refinement	Smaller improvements	Widget speed, markup tidy-up, minor wording, extra templates

Weights say how much attention a habit deserves overall. Priorities say what to fix first. A legal problem is Priority 1 whatever its weight.

The 90 days

When	Focus	What gets done
Days 1 to 30	Foundations	Baseline sheet; every login in the company's name with a second admin; a shared reviews inbox; review links and QR codes tap-tested; the reply backlog cleared; Priority 1 compliance problems fixed; notifications on
Days 31 to 60	Routine	A trigger and a same-day request with one reminder for every client; the negative review process and bad-day plan; the reply standard; Bing, Facebook, Apple and Trustpilot checked; the first monthly report
Days 61 to 90	Use and learn	The AI check; an honest reviews page; the competitor check; themes turned into fixes; the audit re-scored and the next 90 days planned

Quick wins (each under a day)

- Find, copy and tap-test your Google review link and QR code for every branch.
- Reply to every unanswered review, oldest first, without personal data.
- Switch on Google notifications to a shared inbox.
- Stop anything that selects who's asked, or offers anything for a review.
- Make the figures on your website match your profiles, with a date.
- Move the Google Primary Owner role to a company account with two admins.
- Write the bad-day plan on one page.
- Claim Bing Places and your Facebook Page.
- Write down who owns what (lesson 7.1).

Never do

- Buy, fake, swap or incentivise reviews, or ask staff or family to write them.
- Ask only happy clients, or send unhappy ones somewhere else.

- Run a one-day review drive, or send more than one reminder.
- Argue with a reviewer in public, or put personal data in a reply.
- Show only five-star quotes and call it your rating.
- Mark up your own reviews expecting stars in Google.
- Scrape a competitor's reviews or post about them.
- Paste client data into public AI tools.
- Pay anyone who guarantees reviews, ratings or rankings.

Measuring progress honestly

Review numbers are small and noisy. One bad review moves a small profile's average, and a good month can be a fluke. Each month, track requests sent, reviews received on each platform, the share of requests that led to a review, reviews in the last three months, your average rating with the count behind it, response rate, typical reply time, and themes with example quotes. Each quarter, add the AI check ("named in 4 of 12 answers"), the competitor comparison and enquiries by source, and add "read your reviews" to your "How did you hear about us?" options.

What you control	What you partly control	What you don't control
Who's asked, how fast, reply rate and quality, ownership, accuracy	Review count and recency, because they depend on how many deals you complete	Platforms' algorithms, competitors' choices, and the client who was always going to leave a poor review

Judge yourself first on what you control.

Ratings move slowly, and small profiles move fastest

A profile with 100 reviews averaging 4.2 that gets five new five-star reviews moves to about 4.24. A profile with 20 reviews averaging 4.2 moves to about 4.36. So a small profile moves faster than a large one, in both directions. In the first month, what changes is the process: links working, backlog cleared, requests going out. Rankings, AI mentions and enquiries may or may not follow, and no UK study shows how much.

- Never judge from one month, and always show the count next to a percentage.
- Don’t compare a month with 3 reviews to a month with 15.
- Don’t claim a cause: if you made six changes, you don’t know which one mattered.
- Keep dated screenshots of important findings.
- Once a quarter, give the directors one page: the audit score and how it moved, Priority 1 issues open and closed, request coverage, response rate, reply time, rating and count, one theme and its fix, the competitor gap, the AI check, and what you need from them.

Sources

1. Prohibited and restricted content, Google Maps user contributed content policy. support.google.com/contributionpolicy/answer/7400114

2. Fake reviews: guidance for businesses (CMA208), Competition and Markets Authority. gov.uk/government/publications/fake-reviews-cma208

3. Testimonials and endorsements, Advertising Standards Authority. asa.org.uk/advice-online/testimonials-and-endorsements.html

The end

You've finished the Reviews course

Nothing in this course needs special skill: a genuine reply, a well-timed request, a routine kept up. What separates agencies with strong reputations from the rest is rarely knowing more. It's doing the same simple things consistently, month after month.

Online: reyse.co.uk/reviewscourse/course-complete

I can't guarantee a five-star average, and nobody honestly can. Reviews are other people's opinions, and some of what happens is outside your control: platforms' algorithms, a competitor with a longer history, the occasional unreasonable client. But a consistent process, asking well, replying fast and watching for patterns, moves the numbers you do control further than almost anyone bothers to.

Consistency is the most important thing in this course. A backlog that builds up over a month is a much bigger job than staying on top of it week by week, and a stale profile with unanswered reviews reads worse than a newer one that's looked after. The longer you keep it up, the more it compounds: a long, steady, well-managed review history is one of the hardest things for a competitor to catch up on, precisely because it can't be rushed.

Where to spend your time

- Daily: reply to new reviews.
- Weekly: the Google check, and requests going out to every client.
- Monthly: response rate, recency and themes; Bing, Trustpilot and Facebook; who has access; the figures on your website.
- Quarterly: the AI check, the competitor check, a tap-test of your review links, and the audit.
- Twice a year: your policy and request wording, the bad-day plan, and your tools and providers.

And if you're short on time, this is where it pays off first: every lesson, biggest weight first. These are our planning weights, not a platform's, and a legal problem is always a fix-now problem whatever its weight.



Every check and habit from the course is in one printable schedule, and the audit turns what's left into a 90-day plan. Re-run it every quarter.

Get the schedule

Open the reviews audit

Want us to do it for you?

None of this is hard on its own. Most of it, a 15-year-old could do. What's hard is asking every client, replying to every review within hours, and doing it every week without fail while the platforms' rules and the law keep changing. If you'd rather hand that over, Review Management does exactly this for agencies like yours.

reyse.co.uk/products/reviews

One more thing I'd genuinely appreciate. If you got any value from this course, please leave us an honest review on Google, whatever you think of it. It's how this course reaches the next person who needs it, and we reply to every one.

Thank you for the most valuable thing you gave today: your attention.

See our other free courses