

# The Ultimate Guide To VETERINARY REVIEWS



Practices are built by healthy pets and happy clients.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

# Veterinary Reviews

Word of mouth referrals have long been the most consistent source of growth for business's of all types, and when it comes to choosing a practice to take care of our four-legged (or maybe winged) family members, recommendations from the places and people we trust is the #1 way we make our decisions.

This means the most optimized SEO strategy, the most beautiful website and compelling offering, or even the best ad campaign in the world will all do little-to-nothing if the first thing prospective clients see when they google your practice or find you with a search like "vets near me" is a lack of reviews, or pile of bad reviews.

In this guide we'll be going over:

- Why Online Reviews are Important for Your Practice.
- How to Make Your Positive Reviews More Visible to Everyone.
- How to Ask for Reviews and Gather More Positive Reviews.
- How to Respond to the Positive, and More Importantly, the Negative Reviews You Receive From Clients (trust us on this, even negative reviews can be made positive for your practice).

Why are online reviews  
important for your  
practice?

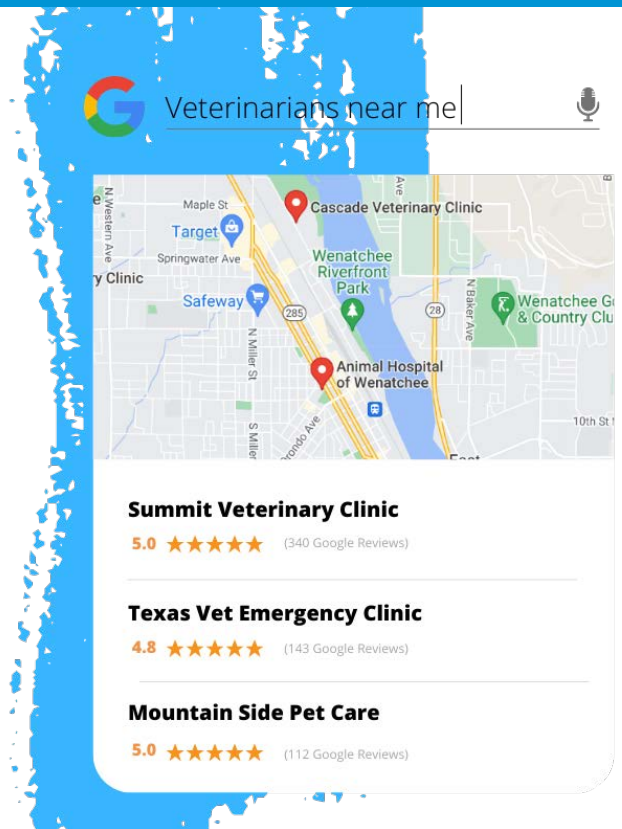


Well to start, online reviews are one of the main visuals used in search engine results. The next time you are looking for/Googling any business, take a moment to acknowledge how your eye is drawn to the review results and Google business listings. These are shown without having to scroll or click anything at all. This is the decision point for the searcher and the likelihood a business with no reviews will be chosen is staggeringly low (less than 2%).

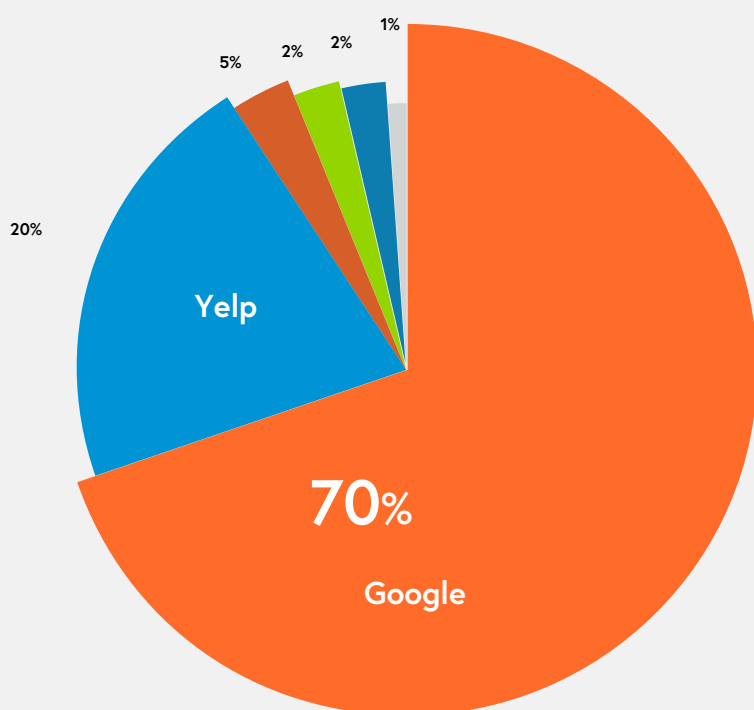
The other equally large factor is the impact on local Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Local SEO is the primary driver of client acquisition: 76% of people who search for a business nearby visit within 24 hours. When it comes to reviews, having a high volume of positive ones works wonders on your local SEO, but more importantly, when your listing finds its way at the top of a search, clients will immediately feel comfortable after seeing proof your practice provides great service from real clients who have worked with your in the past.

Google's search algorithm which decides what will be displayed to the searcher is made up of 200+ factors, and you can really get lost down that rabbit hole if you let yourself. Focusing on reviews is one easy way to make this task simpler. Review data makes up a large percentage (13%) of Google's decision making process. Here are the things Google is looking for:

- Review Quantity (number of reviews)
- Review Consistency (how frequently reviews are posted)
- Review Dispersion (how many sites you have reviews posted on)



We'll talk about strategy with regards to the first two bullet points in the following pages of this guide. Chances are, however, the bigger question mark for you is probably "So... where do I ask for reviews besides Google?". Don't worry, we can help you answer that question. Below is a chart which represents what sites to focus on, and roughly how much attention we think you should give to each.



**Review sites most important to a veterinary practice**



# How to Make Your Reviews More Visible to Everyone

## What Good Are Online Reviews if Nobody Sees Them?

Positive online reviews from real people greatly increases credibility—which translates to new clients and the furthering of your practice's business. But there's a hurdle in-between getting great reviews and getting new clients. Is anybody seeing those reviews?

Let's look at 4 easy steps to making sure your reviews are visible and turning into increased business and street-cred.

### Step 1: If You Haven't Already, Make Sure Your Reviews Are Visible on Google

It's probable that your practice is already visible on the world's most used search engine, but seriously, just in case you aren't: **Do it today.**

To do this you will need to set up a [Google Business account](#) and verify your business. Because the process of doing this takes a fair bit of explaining, we'll leave you with a link to the helpful folks at WordStream who have put together a guide on doing so: <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2020/06/10/create-google-my-business-account>

This also allows you to respond to reviews on Google, the importance of which we will explore in the next pages. Another perk of registering your business with Google is that people will now see your business on Google maps as well.



## Step 2: Identify Your Best Reviews

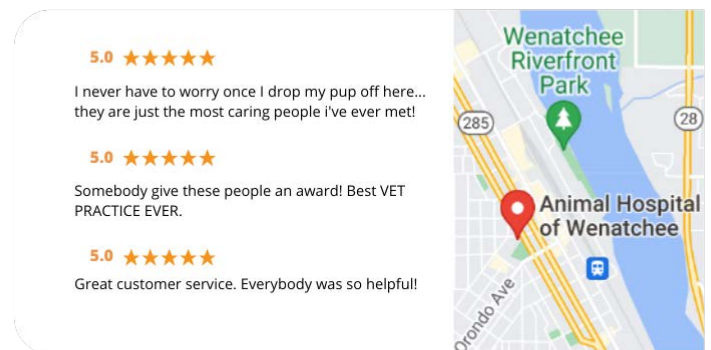
While you don't always have control of how your reviews appear online, it is certainly within your right to pick out the best reviews and leverage what those happy clients have said about your services.

This isn't too hard to do, really. Take the time to look at your reviews on Google or wherever else you may find them. Identify which ones you like.

Pick out the ones that you know really do reflect what awesome service you provide. Don't forget to take a moment to be thankful for the fact that these people took time out of their day to say good things about you and your business!

Consider thanking them personally for their words. You can find more info on good ways to thank and connect with your past clients in the section titled "How to respond to positive reviews".

Let's look at the next step: Getting these best reviews seen on your website.



## Step 3: Reserve Prominent Real Estate On Your Website For Your Reviews —They're Important!

If it's any more than a quick Google scan someone does, your homepage or most visited pages on your website might be the only place a worried pet parent checks before making the decision to choose your practice or another. If they can't easily find a reference from a previous happy client, they will move on to the next practice that does have easy-to-find references.

How often have you torn through online content with the goal of finding the most credible service as fast as possible? It's something we all do—and even more so if we are talking about a pet parent with a sick animal.

The solution is simple: Get your best client reviews on the homepage of your website. Or at least make sure a link to your reviews is somewhere easy to see. Don't make potential clients scroll too long or click through lots of links in order to find out what others are saying about you. Make their job easy, and they will respond by turning up with their business.

## Step 4: Set Up Reminders To Continually Update The Visibility and Quality of Your Reviews

Now, once you've taken these steps to be making the most out of the great reviews you've already got, you will want to think about strategies to make sure this isn't only a "one and done" job.

As you continue building the reputation of your practice, people will continue to leave you good reviews. You might find that some of the newer reviews better explain how good your services are than the old ones, and when this happens it might be time to replace which reviews you make most visible on your website. All we are saying is that you will want to check in regularly to see what is going on with your online review presence.

This step can be accomplished as easily as setting a regular reminder on your calendar software, and/or assigning a certain person within your organization with a good mind for these things to be on the lookout for the best and most current client reviews.

Even if an older review pleases you as much as a newer one, it will be a good idea to update your site with the fresher review. People will notice if your great reviews are only from years ago. That isn't to say old reviews aren't valuable—they show that you've been providing great service for a long time. But potential clients need to also see that you are currently providing great service too! Set up some digital reminders and make sure someone has this specifically on their radar!



## How to Ask for Reviews and Gather More Positive Reviews.

### 1 Do so: Timely

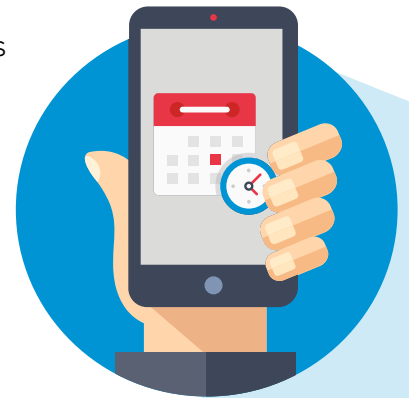
It's best to ask your customers for a review immediately after their pets service. This ensures your practice is still top of mind and makes your outreach come across as relevant and helpful rather than disruptive.

### 2 Do so: Simplistically

Meet your customers where they are. Often this is their smartphones. Your review request messages should be compatible across all desktop and mobile devices — and should involve as few steps as possible.

### 3 Do so: Authentically

It goes without saying that integrity in business and in life is better received than any fake level of success; things are no different when it comes to building trust with your clients. Ask for the review, but then let your level of service decide the outcome. Trying to circumvent this has led to many shady practices like review gating (which btw will get you band on Google these days.)



## 4

**Do so: Consistently**

73% of customers look only at the most recent reviews. This is not a one-and-done strategy. Reviews will only continue to be your business' best friend when you dedicate your efforts to collect new, relevant reviews for years to come.

## How to Respond to Positive Reviews

Responding to online reviews has been shown to result in an increase in online rating scores (Prosperio-Zervas, 2018). This is why it is important to take the time to understand how to craft great responses because that is where you learn to win the game of online reviews.

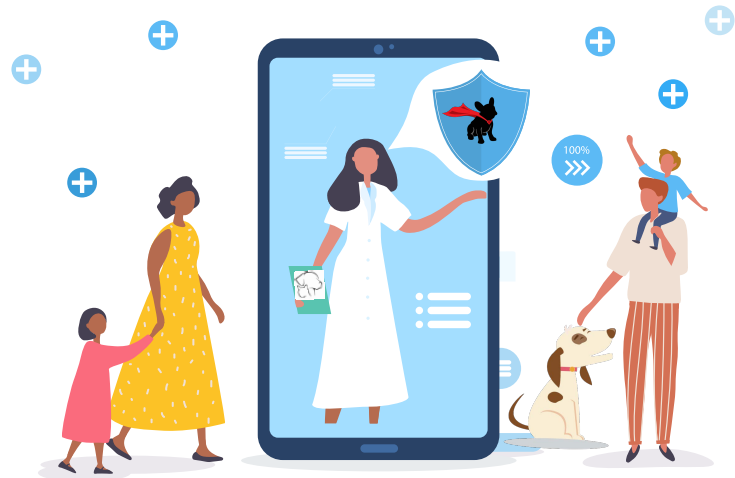
That's why we've highlighted three guidelines to follow when approaching positive reviews. Read on to see these **three pro tips**:



**"93% of consumers used the internet to find a local business in the last year, with 34% searching every day" (Murphy, 2020)**



## Guideline One: Say Thank You



Well, it might seem obvious, but that doesn't mean it isn't important.

Just say thank you. Okay, don't just say "thank you", but make sure to include a note of your appreciation in your responses to positive reviews. After all, it really is something to be thankful for that a person took the time out of their day to point out what was great about their experience at your practice, and these positive reviews become the backbone of your online search result strength.

Saying thank you shows a client that you care, and can be a reason they come back to your practice. This is an opportunity to put an extra, personal touch on their experience with you. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't keep a certain level of professionalism in the tone of your responses, but happily the job of replying to positive reviews is in large part about simply acknowledging how happy everyone in the situation is.

## Guideline Two: Get the Technical Details Involved

Replying to a review is a definite opportunity to attach more keyword hits to your business as it appears through online analytics. For example, Google is able to measure how many times something like "veterinary" occurs in public online text associated with your business, and will give the reward of higher search results for those who score best.

This isn't the only technical detail to consider—you ought to notice things like how often positive reviews are coming in and use this as somewhat of a measure of your practice's online health; or do things like tally up how many times clients are mentioning a certain part of your service they liked. Perhaps a certain team member's name is praised time and time again in your positive reviews. It might be time to reward them and find out what they are doing that makes clients so happy so you can train it to others. Reviews give you research information about what you should do more of.

These are only some examples of the technical details to be considered. The general principle espoused in this guideline might be something like: Constantly seek to measure and maximize the potential presented by positive reviews.

## **Guideline Three: Be Consistent**

If you respond to one positive review, respond to them all. Like we have just mentioned, every reply is an opportunity to get more keyword optimization in. Also, people will notice if you responded to lots of all of the other reviews but not theirs. "Why are they thankful for these other people and not me?" They might ask.

Put a system in place for responding to negative reviews. Use technological reminders like calendar software, and assign a team member to keep a regular watch on responding to new reviews.

Firms that consistently respond to reviews will be simultaneously raising their ratings, according to Harvard Business Review (Prosperio-Zervas, 2018). Furthermore, it may be possible that you will get more positive reviews the more you respond. People will be more likely to leave a review when they see that previous reviews got responses from you. Their expectation of a reply to their positive review might be the factor that pushes them over the edge from not quite going to take the time to do it, to going ahead and writing it up.

Have fun with it. Responding to positive reviews is the time to celebrate your clients and to celebrate your practice. Positive reviews are a sign that you are doing great work, and taking this to heart can be wind in the sails of your team and practice.

Now, onto the topic everyone business owner has asked themselves -- How do I respond to negative reviews?

## How to Respond to Negative Reviews

We've put together 5 powerful tips on how to respond to and make the best of negative online reviews—because the reality is you won't avoid having them crop up.

Right off the bat conventional wisdom tells us that leaving comments from unhappy customers unattended surely cannot be a positive influence on your practice's reputation. Furthermore, it is certain that search engines like Google will rank and show businesses higher on search results whose review scores are higher.

Consider this statistic regarding the importance of mitigating long term damage from poor reviews:

**"Only 48% of consumers would consider using a business with fewer than 4 stars" (Murphy, 2020)**

The basis for why we need to respond to negative reviews is really simple; because we don't want a low rating online, and the mere act of actively responding has been seen to positively influence ratings over time (Prosperio-Zervas, 2018).

Let's dig into our 5 tips about how to do this.

## Tip 1: Appreciate the Negative Reviews—see them as an opportunity to learn and improve

The first thing to do is take a positive attitude towards negative reviews. We must realize that criticism is an opportunity to learn what customers do and do not like. Pay attention to the kinds of complaints people post and implement strategies to avoid garnering further negative reviews. See it as an opportunity to data mine what peoples' pain points are regarding veterinary experiences.

Don't underestimate the power of coming into the situation with a positive attitude and a reason to appreciate a client's complaints.

When you write a response to a negative review, look for opportunities to thank them, even if you don't feel like it. Something like, "Thank you for sharing your experience with us..." can go a long way in calming the waters, and after all it really is something to be thankful for that clients are providing you with research material on how to provide the best service.

## Tip 2: Stay Professional—And don't take it personally

When you respond to reviews, make sure to maintain the appropriate amount of professionalism. Yes, be personal and personable, but don't overdo it. Even if the negative reviewer is vitriolic or unsavory, don't respond in kind.

Don't take it personally. There might be any number of reasons that a person leaves a negative review. Many times it might not even have been anything that your practice did wrong. How many times have you had a hard day and responded more negatively than you might have just because your mood was low?

Your clients will be no exception, and in fact it ought to be considered that they might be anxious or unsettled by the mere fact of needing to bring their pet in for a checkup or something more serious. Even small, normally acceptable things might irritate a worried pet parent more than usual.

Check your spelling; use good grammar; don't speculate on a personal level, but handle the situation as a professional, treating the client doing the reviewing with respect. This doesn't mean that you should pander to them, but rather that you should be direct, polite, and do your best to be unflustered by harsh words.

### **Tip 3: Take it Outside—if a situation needs further action, resolve it privately**

A lot of ground can be regained and client opinion restored if you and your practice show the willingness to go out of your way to understand a client's frustrations and do something to resolve them—but don't make the whole process public.

Leave your contact information, perhaps a phone number at the end of a review, and offer to open up a conversation with the disgruntled client. When you do get in contact with them privately, seek to further understand where their dissatisfaction is coming from and what you can do to alleviate their frustration.

When you take the conversation private rather than getting into all the details in the initial review reply or publicly viewable comments (or any other online platform such as social media for that matter), you will suddenly have the freedom to speak your mind and let the client speak their mind without the added pressure of knowing that what you say will be scrutinized by any number of people online.

Just because you have the space to speak your mind doesn't mean you should do so entirely, though. Let these tips build on each other, and remember to keep it professional. Your job here is to investigate how you can help, and then do that in the most straightforward way possible. Remember, don't take it personally. At the end of the day, some situations will not be resolvable, either because a client is unwilling to settle in a good place, or because the complaint was illegitimate in the first place.

That brings us to our next tip.

#### Tip 4: Don't Apologize For What You Didn't Do

Sometimes you will be accused falsely of producing some negative experience or failing to provide what a client expected.

If it really isn't on you, don't apologize for it. Stand your ground if need be—don't let yourself be bullied by those who have no intention of finding a constructive and mutually beneficial conclusion to a conversation.

You can still be polite and thank people for their reviews, even if illegitimate. People will notice when a harsh review without substance and a kind response go hand in hand, and this will after all gain the confidence of potential clients in bringing you their business.

If you have good reason to believe that a review is fraudulent, perhaps not even a real past client, then report this to Google or wherever your reviews are being posted. It's very much within your right to protect your reputation from being unfairly slandered.



## Tip 5: Measure and Evaluate Your Response Methods

Harvard Business review has found that in general responding to negative reviews results in higher ratings for businesses (Prosperio-Zervas, 2018).

However, this does not mean that you should not be watching how your overall ratings respond to your practice of responding to negative reviews. One goal is to keep at least over a 4-star review rating. For an example, consider that when a business type is searched on Google maps—"Veterinary practices near me," businesses with less than a 4-star rating might not even appear on a search results list (Widewail, 2020).

If your ratings are not increasing, you might consider how your replies look. Are you implementing the other tips in this article as well as your own best ideas about how to respond well?

Furthermore, are you taking the opportunity of replies to insert keywords that help your organic search results? For example, are you saying something like, "We are sorry that your experience at our veterinary practice..." This will be an extra hit on the kinds of keywords people will search for when looking for veterinary services.

In general, the principle this tip is espousing is that you actually take the time to evaluate the data about how well your responses to negative reviews are addressing the issue at hand—then transmute this data into ever-improving techniques for becoming alerted to and dealing with these negative reviews.