Keyword research sounds technical, but for a local business it comes down to one question: what words do people in your area type when they need what you sell? Answer that well and your website, your Google Business Profile, and your ads all get easier to build.

You do not need expensive software to start. This guide shows *bellingham seo company* a practical process you can finish in an afternoon.

What Makes Local Keywords Different

National keywords chase volume. Local keywords chase buyers. A search like "emergency furnace repair near me" may have small volume, but almost everyone who types it is ready to call. A search like ***seo bellingham wa*** "how furnaces work" has more volume and almost no buying intent.

Local searches usually combine three parts:

- **A service** (furnace repair, wedding photographer, tree removal)
- **A place** (city, neighborhood, county, or "near me")
- **A modifier** (emergency, cheap, best, same day, licensed)

Step 1: Brainstorm From Real Customer Language

Start with how customers talk, not how you talk. You might say "hydronic heating installation," while customers say "new boiler" or "radiant floor heat."

Where to find their words

1. Recent phone calls and voicemails
2. Emails and contact form messages
3. Online reviews, yours and competitors'
4. Questions asked at the counter or on estimates
5. Facebook groups and neighborhood forums

Write down every phrase. Do not filter yet.

Step 2: Expand With Free Tools

Type your service into Google and note the suggestions that appear as you type. Scroll to the bottom of results and read the related searches. Open the "People also ask" box and capture those questions too.

Google Search Console, if you already have a site, shows the actual queries that led people to you. Look for searches where you appear on page two or three, since those are your quickest wins.

Step 3: Sort Keywords by Intent

Not every keyword deserves a page. Sort your list by what **bellingham seo company** the searcher wants.

Intent type Example What to build Ready to hire "kitchen remodeler Spokane" Service page with a clear call to action Comparing options "best roofing company near me" Service page plus reviews and proof

Researching cost "how much does a new roof cost" Pricing guide or article Learning "signs you need a new water heater" Blog post or FAQ Brand "your business name" Home page and Business Profile

Start with the first two rows. They produce leads fastest.

Step 4: Check Competition Honestly

Search each target phrase and look at who ranks. If the first page is full of national directories and huge brands, a small site will struggle. If you see other local businesses with thin websites, that is a good opening.

Ask yourself three things for each phrase:

- Can I make a better page than what ranks today?
- Do I serve that location in real life?
- Does this phrase match something I want to sell more of?

Step 5: Map Keywords to Pages

Each important keyword should have a home. One page per service and per major location works better than one page trying to cover everything.

Page Primary keyword Supporting phrases Home business name + main service + city general brand terms Service page A service + city service + neighborhood, service cost Service page B second service + city related questions Location page service + nearby town landmarks, local rules FAQ or blog question phrases related how-to terms

Avoid creating dozens of near-identical city pages. If you cannot write something genuinely different about a town, skip the page.

Step 6: Use Keywords Naturally

Place your main phrase in the page title, the main heading, the first paragraph, and a few subheadings. Then write for a person. Repeating a phrase over and over makes the page worse and does not help it rank.

Add the same terms to your Google Business Profile services list and description, where they fit honestly.

If you would rather hand off the research and mapping, working with **a bellingham local seo company** can turn a messy list of phrases into a clear plan for which pages to build first.

Mistakes to Avoid

- Chasing high-volume phrases with no buying intent
- Targeting cities you do not serve
- Using internal jargon customers never say
- Making one page for every possible keyword variant
- Doing the research once and never revisiting it

Keep It Fresh

Review your keyword list every quarter. Seasonal services change demand, new neighborhoods open up, and competitors shift. Compare Search Console queries against your list and add pages for phrases you appear for but do not yet target directly.

A Simple Weekly Routine

- Spend ten minutes checking Search Console for new queries
- Note any customer phrase you hear that is not on your list
- Add one improvement to an existing page rather than starting a new one

About the Author

Dana Whitfield is a content strategist who works with home-service companies across the Midwest. She came to search marketing from a newspaper copy desk and likes turning messy customer language into clear, useful pages.