



Creating a Store Locator

A handy Quick-Start guide to Blipstar

With Blipstar it is easy to create your own locator and this short document will guide you through the process. It assumes you have created a Blipstar account (<https://blipstar.com>) and have logged in to your account.

Main menu

The main account page has links to the main sections and useful bits of information regarding your account such as your locations limit. The menu links are in logical order, starting with Locations, so you can just follow them one at a time:

- Locations

Whatever your “things” represent (we'll call them stores in this guide), Blipstar needs to know where they are located. This is achieved in one of the following ways:

Option 1 – File Upload: Creating a spreadsheet with the details of each store (as well as other optional information). Something like...

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Name	Street	City	State	Postal code	Country	Phone
Basic Test store	1600 Amphitheatre Parkway	Mountain View	CA	94043	United States	
Advanced Test store	2495 Golden Gate Avenue	San Francisco	CA	94117	United States	(123) 456-789
Yet another store	120 Main Street	Los Angeles	CA	96712	United States	(890) 555-345

Tip: The simplest thing to do is download the [template spreadsheet](#), add your store data in the defined columns, save it locally, then upload.

Note that column names are important as Blipstar uses them to recognize certain types of data. If you've downloaded the template spreadsheet all the column names are in place ready for you to use. You can delete any columns you don't need, or just leave the fields blank. The full set of field names supported is available at https://blipstar.com/blipstarplus/accepted_fields . The only required fields are **Name** and **Street** and **City** – everything else is optional. You'll probably want to add at least some basic info though such as phone and website. Note that the column name is case-insensitive (so “phone” is okay, as well as “Phone” or “PHONE”).

Once you have created your data and selected the file via the file upload dialog click the Upload button – or just drag and drop!

Tip: We recommend you keep a copy of your spreadsheet safe, in case you need it to make any updates to your locator in the future. Treat it as your definitive dataset.

- If you want to ADD a new location, add it to the spreadsheet and upload the full spreadsheet again.
- If you want to EDIT a location, edit it on the spreadsheet and upload again.
- If you want to DELETE a location, remove it from the spreadsheet and, you guessed it, upload the spreadsheet again.

Option 2 – Online editing: If spreadsheets aren't your thing or you only have a handful of locations you can do everything with Blipstar via the online Add, Edit and Delete buttons available on the Locations page (you'll find them below the Import section). Here's what the “Add” screen looks like...

Online-only store ?

Name

Address (inc. City)

Postal/Zip code

State

Country Select country... ▼

Phone

Icon ? How to define different icons

Show Advanced fields »

Add

Option 3 – Link to External source: Instead of doing manual updates you can link to a “live” data source; this can be particularly useful if your store locations change fairly frequently. There are currently several sources you can link to – Salesforce, Google Sheets or a CSV file stored on a web server (e.g. in the “cloud”). Each of these options has a dedicated section on the Import page – just follow the instructions.

Geocoding

Once you've imported your data Blipstar will attempt to geocode the locations. Geocoding is the process of converting a text-based location (e.g. an address) into geographic co-ordinates which can be shown on a map. Blipstar uses the best geocoding services available but even that can sometimes fail to geocode something, or geocodes it in the wrong location. In these instances you need to edit the address and turn it into something the geocoder does recognize or, as a last resort, manually define the geographic co-ordinates.

Geocoding can take a while and a progress bar shows you the current status. Once complete it will tell you how many, if any, locations failed to geocode. For these you need to go back to the spreadsheet and alter the addresses to valid ones, then upload your new file. Alternatively you can use the online Edit function to correct addresses within Blipstar itself.

Once done clicking the link to Verify locations allows you see where Blipstar thinks each location is. It's worth double-checking as a sanity check, especially if a store doesn't appear in the results when you'd expect it to.

Here are some basic geocoding tips...

1.	Double check the spelling is correct. Even subtle things like "rd" instead of "Road" can make a difference.
2.	Make sure the address is as complete as possible (state codes and postal codes all help).
3.	The easiest type of text to geocode follows the structure of an address you'd put on a letter or parcel.
4.	If your locations are in one country then specify the country in the Settings > General – this provides an extra clue to the geocoder.
5.	Names of buildings or units that precede the main address can confuse geocoders, such as Unit 10, Gotham Industrial Park. If it fails to geocode then enclose the building or unit in brackets e.g. (Unit 10) – it will be excluded when geocoding but still appear in the address.
6.	If your locations are in more than one country then it advised to specify the country.
7.	Load up Google Maps or similar and try out different variations until the address is recognized – iff an online mapper can geocode it then Blipstar should be able too.
8.	If all else fails then you can specify geographic co-ordinates yourself by adding a field to the spreadsheet called "Position" and entering a WGS84 lat,long position. For example the position of Big Ben in London is ' 51.500611,0.124611 '. Helpfully, if you go to https://blipstar.com/blipstarplus/verifylocations , the Verify Locations page, then moving the cursor over the map will display the latitude and longitude.

- Settings

The Settings page allows you to customize all aspects of your store locator. You don't actually need to alter anything to get your locator up and running - it works straight out of the box - but most users will want to tailor it to some extent. It is split into several tabs: General, Map, Text, Icons, Tags and Styling.

Tab	Purpose	Tips
General	Key store locator settings	You'll find lots of options here to help tailor your locator, such as the default size, search type and country
Map	Map-related settings	Used for setting up the map (or turning it off if you don't want one)
Text	Text labels	Any text, heading or label that appears in your locator can be changed here. So if you are setting up a stockist finder you could change the Main heading to "Find your nearest AMCE Stockist" or whatever. This means you can have a store locator in a different language
Icons	Store icons and Search location icon	You can change the default icon used to plot your locations by uploading an image. Smallish, squareish, PNG file works best. You can also specify different icons for different stores types
Tags	Settings for Tags/categories	Used for tagging your stores with different attributes (which can be anything you like). Users can then filter their search by searching for certain tags
Styling	Settings for the appearance of your locator	As well as altering basic settings like fonts and colors, you can also define your custom CSS. You can also choose from a range of Templates rather than starting from scratch

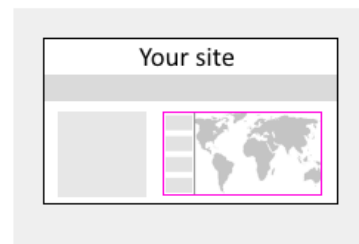
Tip: When you have edited any settings be sure to press the "Save" button below the tabs to commit the changes.

- Deploy

Once you're happy with the basic set up of your locator the final step is to add it to your website, so people can start using it and find you! To simplify this process we've devised a Deployment wizard which will guide you through the various options (it might look a bit daunting but trust us, it isn't!)

Type of Deployment

- Embed in web page** Ideal for site integration (**Recommended**)
- Standalone page** Opens in own browser window
- Search widget** Small search widget which launches store locator
- Facebook** Guide to Facebook integration
- Individual Store page** Create an SEO-friendly page for a single store
- Website creator/e-commerce** Deploy within website creation tool
(e.g. Wordpress, Squarespace, Shopify)



Start with map (skip the Search view)

There are various options; the key choices to make are to do with the type of locator interface, the type of search, size and tags. At the end the wizard produces some unique code which you can then paste into your web page. The code consists of standard HTML and Javascript.

Tip: Deployment options over-ride your default values in Settings.

Note that you can save your defined Deployment settings for future use.

You can also use the Deployment wizard to create more than one locator (or map). For example you could first create the code for a standard store locator and add it to a Store locator page on your site. Then you could create some code which displays a map of all your store locations in a specific country. Or perhaps a small zip code search widget for your homepage. It's a very flexible system.

- Analyze

If you want to record when people do a search with your locator (and more importantly *where* they searched for) you can turn on Analytics.

- Account

This is the place to head to if you need to do thing such as:

- change your email, password or username;
- upgrade, renew or cancel your account;
- add a new sub-account;
- download a copy of your data;
- get a backup of your data (i.e. if you accidentally messed up!)

What next?

The Tutorials (<https://blipstar.com/blipstarplus/tutorials>) are a good place to head to discover some of the more advanced things you can do with Blipstar:

[Using different icons for different store types](#)

Differentiate between store types by changing their map icons.

[Add search filtering using Tags](#)

If you want your store locator to filter by product type (or some other classification) then these simple instructions show you how.

[Customize your store locator listings](#)

Add images, buttons and other neat things to your store listings using the Misc fields.

[Use CSS to style your store locator](#)

How to use Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) to alter the appearance of your store locator.

[Use Priority values to order search results](#)

How to promote certain stores to the top of search results, and increase their spatial influence.

[Set up multiple locator accounts](#)

If you want to add a new skin to your locator (e.g. offer it in a different language) or want to manage multiple accounts, this tutorial shows you the steps involved.

[Create a custom search form widget](#)

How to generate your own customized search form that uses Blipstar to display the results on a map (ideal for adding a small store locator widget to your homepage).

[Let others add and edit store locations](#)

Enable shared editing or the ability to let users submit new stores on your website.

[Integrate Blipstar with a backend database to dynamically update your locator](#)

Sync your database of store locations with Blipstar with some simple CSV data interchange. Ideal if your store location data is already stored in an internal database - cut out manual importing!

[Create a store locator with defined sales territories/regions](#)

Learn how to use the Sales Territories search mode to give stores exclusive priority based on zip/postal codes.

Conclusion

You should now have successfully set up your locator. The key is making sure your data is good, particularly the addresses – *Garbage In, Garbage Out* as the mantra goes. Why not play around with some of the Settings or try some of the more advanced Deploy options?

Do you have a specific question? We'd love to [hear from you](#).