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Free Cheat sheet

SEO, GEO and AEO: The One-Page Plan That Covers All Three

Three names, one job. Plain definitions, what really changed, and one weekly plan so you never pay twice for the same work.

You get plain definitions of SEO, AEO and GEO, the facts behind each one, and a single plan that covers all three. Use it to stop paying three retainers for one job.



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How to use it

1. Read the definitions table once so the terms stop confusing you.
 2. Use the red-flag checklist on the next agency or freelancer pitch you get.
 3. Run the one-page plan every week for 90 days, then re-test how AI tools describe you.
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The three terms in one table

All three aim at the same thing: be the clearest, most trusted answer to your buyer's question. They differ in where the answer shows up.

Term	Stands for	Goal	Where you see it	Where the idea comes from
SEO	Search engine optimization	Rank and get clicks in search results	Google and Bing results pages	Industry practice since the 1990s; Google's own SEO Starter Guide
AEO	Answer engine optimization	Be picked as the direct answer	Featured snippets, voice answers, AI answer boxes	Industry term, no official definition from Google
GEO	Generative engine optimization	Get quoted or cited inside AI-written answers	ChatGPT search, Perplexity, Google AI Overviews and AI Mode	Aggarwal et al., 'GEO: Generative Engine Optimization', arXiv, Nov 2023

What changed and what didn't

Each line is backed by an official doc or the original paper. Where something is only claimed by vendors, it says so.

- ☐ **Changed: answers now get written for the buyer, with your page as a cited link instead of a blue link.**

Google says AI Overviews and AI Mode show supporting links and may use a 'query fan-out' technique to find more pages while the answer is generated.

- ☐ **Changed: new crawlers you should know by name (OAI-SearchBot, PerplexityBot, Google-Extended).**

OpenAI recommends allowing OAI-SearchBot if you want to appear in ChatGPT search answers. PerplexityBot surfaces sites in Perplexity results. Google-Extended only controls Gemini training and grounding, and Google says it does not affect inclusion in Google Search.

- ☐ **Didn't change: you need to be indexed first.**

Google: a page must be indexed and eligible to show with a snippet to appear in AI features. There are 'no additional requirements' and no 'special optimizations necessary'.

- ☐ **Didn't change: no special file or markup is required.**

Google says you don't need new machine-readable files, AI text files or special schema to appear in AI Overviews or AI Mode. llms.txt is a community proposal, not a Google requirement.

- ☐ **Didn't change: traffic still shows up in Search Console.**

Google counts AI feature appearances inside the Performance report under the 'Web' search type. There is no separate AI Overviews filter there.

- ☐ **Open question: exactly how much AI answers cut clicks for your site.**

Studies disagree and depend on query type. Measure your own Search Console clicks vs impressions before believing any one number.

Red flags in 'AI SEO' sales pitches

- ☐ **They sell SEO, AEO and GEO as three separate retainers.**

The work overlaps almost fully: crawlable pages, clear answers, trusted mentions.

- ☐ **They promise a guaranteed spot in ChatGPT or AI Overviews.**

Google says indexing and serving are not guaranteed even when you meet every requirement. Nobody controls AI answers.

☐ **They say you need a special AI file or schema to be seen.**

Google says no special files or markup are needed for its AI features.

☐ **They quote 'up to 40% more visibility' as a promise.**

That figure is the maximum gain measured in the GEO paper's lab benchmark, not a result for your business.

☐ **They plan to mass-produce AI pages or post fake reviews and Reddit comments.**

Scaled low-value content breaks Google's spam policies, and fake participation breaks Reddit's rules.

☐ **They report 'AI visibility scores' with no prompts or method shown.**

If you can't see which prompts they ran and when, you can't check the number.

One plan that covers all three

1 Week 1: make sure you can be found

Verify your site in Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools. Check robots.txt allows Googlebot, Bingbot, OAI-SearchBot and PerplexityBot. Inspect your 5 most important URLs and confirm they are indexed.

2 Week 2: list the buyer questions

Write the 20 questions buyers ask before they pay you (price, comparison, 'is it worth it', 'best X in city'). Pull them from sales calls, emails, reviews and Search Console queries.

3 Weeks 3-6: answer each question on a real page

One page per service, a pricing page, an About page and an FAQ in your customers' words. Put the direct answer in the first sentence under a question heading. Add facts AI can quote: prices, numbers, locations, dates.

4

Weeks 7-10: earn mentions elsewhere

Reviews on your Google Business Profile, listings on the sites that rank for 'best X', guest answers on podcasts and forums. AI answers tend to repeat what many sources agree on (a hypothesis widely held, not a measured rule).

5

Monthly: test and fix

Ask ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity the same 5 buyer questions. Log who gets named and which pages get cited. Fix the wrong facts at their source page.

*Featured pick***theStacc**

theStacc plans, writes, SEO-scores and publishes blog articles to WordPress, Webflow, Ghost or Shopify, and its SEO Auditor checks whether AI crawlers can access your site. It can take weeks 3-6 of this plan off your plate if you'd rather not write every page yourself.

Disclosure: I work at theStacc as a product growth marketer, so I am biased. Compare it against the free options on this page and pick what fits you.

Sources

- Google Search Central: AI features and your website — <https://developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/ai-features>
- Aggarwal et al., GEO: Generative Engine Optimization (arXiv 2311.09735) — <https://arxiv.org/abs/2311.09735>
- OpenAI: Overview of OpenAI crawlers — <https://developers.openai.com/api/docs/bots>
- Perplexity: Perplexity crawlers — <https://docs.perplexity.ai/guides/bots>
- Google: Common crawlers (Google-Extended) — <https://developers.google.com/search/docs/crawling-indexing/google-common-crawlers>
- Google Search spam policies — <https://developers.google.com/search/docs/essentials/spam-policies>
- Google: SEO Starter Guide — <https://developers.google.com/search/docs/fundamentals/seo-starter-guide>
- Bing Webmaster Tools — <https://www.bing.com/webmasters/about>
- llms.txt proposal — <https://llmstxt.org/>

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