



AI PLAYBOOK SERIES

AEO Optimization Checklist

21 actions to make your content visible in AI search engines, AI Overviews, and LLM-powered answer experiences.

Why AEO Matters Now

Answer Engine Optimization (AEO) is the practice of structuring your content so AI systems — Google AI Overviews, ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, and Copilot — can find, understand, and cite your pages when users ask questions. This is not a replacement for SEO. AEO layers on top of your existing strategy, ensuring that when search shifts from links to answers, your brand is the one being cited.

58% GOOGLE SEARCHES TRIGGER AI OVERVIEWS	84% AI CITATIONS FROM THIRD- PARTY SOURCES	3× HIGHER CTR WHEN CITED IN AI ANSWERS	5 AI ENGINES MONITORED BY O8
---	---	---	---

Recommended Timeline

TIMEFRAME	FOCUS	EXPECTED OUTCOME
Week 1-2	Category 1: Structural Foundation	Pages become parseable by AI crawlers
Week 3-4	Category 2: Content Architecture	Key pages start appearing in AI Overviews
Week 5-6	Category 3: Authority Signals	Citation frequency increases
Ongoing	Category 4: Monitoring & Iteration	Sustained and growing AI visibility

1 Structural Foundation

- ☐ **Implement FAQ schema (FAQPage) on your top 20 pages** **CRITICAL**
FAQ schema gives AI systems pre-structured Q&A pairs to extract. Prioritize pages that rank for question-based queries.
- ☐ **Add HowTo schema on all instructional content** **HIGH**
Step-by-step content with HowTo markup is heavily favored by AI Overviews and featured snippets.
- ☐ **Deploy Organization schema with sameAs links** **CRITICAL**
Include sameAs links to LinkedIn, Wikipedia, and social profiles. Helps LLMs connect entity references to your brand.
- ☐ **Create and maintain /llms.txt at your domain root** **CRITICAL**
A plain-text file that tells AI crawlers what your site covers and where to find key content. Think of it as robots.txt for LLMs.
- ☐ **Audit XML sitemap for completeness and freshness** **HIGH**
Ensure your sitemap includes every indexable page with accurate lastmod dates. AI crawlers use sitemaps for discovery.
- ☐ **Verify robots.txt allows AI crawlers** **HIGH**
Check that you haven't blocked GPTBot, Google-Extended, PerplexityBot, or ClaudeBot. Blocking them means you cannot be cited.

2 Content Architecture

☐ Structure pages with clear H2/H3 hierarchy and concise lead paragraphs **CRITICAL**

LLMs parse headings as topic signals. Each H2 should open with a 1-2 sentence summary that stands alone as an answer.

☐ Add inline definition blocks for key concepts **HIGH**

When introducing a term, provide a bolded definition in the first paragraph. Example: “**AEO (Answer Engine Optimization)** is the practice of...”

☐ Create comparison tables on competitive and evaluative pages **HIGH**

AI systems prefer structured, tabular data for comparison answers. “X vs Y” queries pull heavily from HTML tables.

☐ Write explicit “Who is this for?” and “What you’ll learn” intros **MEDIUM**

Contextual framing helps LLMs match your content to specific user intents. Place in the first 200 words.

☐ Add “Key Takeaway” summaries at the end of long sections **MEDIUM**

LLMs often extract from page endings. A bolded summary paragraph at each section’s bottom provides a clean extraction target.

3 Authority Signals

☐ Cite primary sources and link to authoritative references **CRITICAL**

LLMs evaluate source credibility. Pages citing .gov, .edu, and recognized industry sources are treated as more trustworthy.

☐ Add author bylines with credentials and author schema **HIGH**

E-E-A-T signals matter. An article by “Jane Smith, VP of Digital Strategy” with a linked author page scores higher than anonymous content.

☐ Include original data, proprietary stats, or unique research **CRITICAL**

LLMs heavily cite pages with original data they can’t find elsewhere. First-party benchmarks and case study metrics are citation magnets.

☐ Earn backlinks from high-authority domains **HIGH**

AI systems use link graphs as a trust signal. Focus on editorial backlinks from industry publications and reputable directories.

☐ Maintain freshness with visible “Last Updated” dates **MEDIUM**

Content recency affects citation ranking. Display updated dates prominently and refresh key pages quarterly.

4 Monitoring & Iteration

☐ Set up biweekly AI citation monitoring across five engines **CRITICAL**

Track whether your brand is cited by ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Copilot, and Google AI Overviews. You cannot optimize what you do not measure.

☐ Track competitor AI citation share-of-voice **HIGH**

Monitor which competitors appear in AI answers for your target queries. Identify gaps where they are cited but you are not.

☐ Audit Google AI Overviews for your top 20 keywords **HIGH**

Check which queries trigger AI Overviews and whether your pages are cited. Use DataForSEO or manual search to gather this data.

☐ Run quarterly GEO content gap analysis **MEDIUM**

Identify queries where competitors are cited by AI engines and you are absent. Prioritize for content creation or optimization.

☐ A/B test content structure changes and measure citation impact **MEDIUM**

Make one structural change per page per quarter (e.g., add FAQ schema, restructure headings) and track citation frequency changes.

Need help implementing this checklist?

O8's AI Search Visibility Audit analyzes your site keyword-by-keyword across all five AI engines and delivers a prioritized 30-day sprint plan. [Learn more at o8.agency/ai-playbook](https://o8.agency/ai-playbook)