MIDNIGHT WEBS

FREE RESOURCE · AI SEARCH CHECKLIST

AI Search Visibility Checklist

Google AI Overviews, AI Mode, ChatGPT search and Perplexity answer questions before anyone clicks. Google's own guidance is clear: there is no special markup or file that unlocks them, and the same fundamentals apply. This checklist turns those fundamentals into concrete steps.

Updated November 2026 | 13 min read | 48 checks

WHO SHOULD USE IT	WHAT IT COVERS	GOOD TO KNOW
Anyone whose business depends on being found by people who ask questions	8 areas, from crawl access to a 30-day plan	Google says no extra requirements or special schema exist for AI Overviews or AI Mode

START HERE

Check that your best pages are indexed and not blocked for `Googlebot`, `Bingbot` or `OAI-SearchBot`. A page the systems cannot fetch cannot be cited, however well it is written.

TICK THE BOX WHEN DONE · MUST DO = HIGHEST IMPACT

01 Understand what has changed and what has not

AI search is built on search. Knowing what is real saves you from expensive advice that sells shortcuts.

- [ ] MUST DO **Accept that the foundation is ordinary SEO**
  Google states that AI Overviews and AI Mode rely on its core ranking and quality systems, and that "there are no additional requirements" and "no special schema.org structured data" for them.

- [ ] MUST DO **Know the entry requirement**
  To appear as a supporting link, a page must be indexed and eligible to show a snippet in Google Search. If it is not, nothing else on this list matters.

- [ ] **Treat "AEO" and "GEO" as labels, not new rulebooks**
  They describe optimising for AI answers. From Google's perspective this is still SEO.

- [ ] **Do not rely on `llms.txt` for Google**
  Google says you do not need AI text files or new markup. Some other tools may read them, but there is no evidence of a ranking benefit.

- [ ] **Do not mass-produce pages for every phrasing of a question**
  Google's guide says doing this to manipulate AI responses violates its scaled content abuse policy and is ineffective.

- [ ] **Expect fewer clicks and better ones**
  Google reports clicks from pages with AI Overviews are higher quality. Plan to measure outcomes, not only visits.

HOW TO CHECK

Search three of your key questions in Google and in ChatGPT search. Note which sources are cited and what they have in common.

02 Make your pages easy to retrieve

AI answers are assembled from pages that can be fetched, read and trusted.

- [ ] MUST DO **Allow the search crawlers you want**
  `Googlebot` and `Bingbot` for Google and Bing, `OAI-SearchBot` for ChatGPT search, `PerplexityBot` for Perplexity. Check `robots.txt`, your CDN and your firewall; bot-protection rules often block them by accident.

- [ ] MUST DO **Distinguish search bots from training bots**
  Blocking `GPTBot` or `Google-Extended` limits model training, not search visibility. Blocking `Googlebot` removes you from Search and from its AI features.

- [ ] **Serve the main answer in plain HTML**
  Content that needs a click, a login or heavy client-side rendering may be missed.

- [ ] **Fix indexing problems first**
  Check Search Console's Page indexing report for "`noindex`", canonical errors, soft 404s and blocked resources.

- [ ] **Use clear headings and internal links**
  One H1, descriptive H2 and H3, and links with meaningful anchor text from related pages.

- [ ] **Resolve redirect chains and duplicate URLs**
  One preferred URL per topic.

HOW TO CHECK

Use the URL Inspection tool in Search Console on a key page, and check "View crawled page" shows your main text.

03 Write answers that are easy to quote

AI systems extract passages. Pages that state things clearly and completely are easier to use.

- [ ] MUST DO **Answer first, then explain**
  Open each section with a direct one- or two-sentence answer, and add context after it.
- [ ] **Use headings that match real questions**
  "How much does a website cost in Moldova?" rather than "Pricing considerations".
- [ ] **Keep paragraphs short and use lists and tables**
  Two to four sentences per paragraph; numbered steps for processes; tables for comparisons.
- [ ] **Define terms and state conditions**
  Who the advice applies to, what it costs, how long it takes and what can go wrong.
- [ ] **Cover what people compare**
  Price, timeline, requirements, risks, alternatives and results. AI answers often use "query fan-out" - several related searches - so pages that cover the neighbouring questions are more useful.
- [ ] **Write for people, not for bots**
  Google says its systems understand synonyms and meaning, so keyword stuffing and repetition add nothing.

HOW TO CHECK

Read the first sentence under each heading. If it does not answer the heading on its own, rewrite it.

04 Add evidence, experience and named authors

Google calls the goal "non-commodity content": information that goes beyond what anyone could write from common knowledge.

- [ ] MUST DO **Publish something only you can say**
  Your own numbers, test results, prices, timelines, photos or lessons from projects you actually did.
- [ ] MUST DO **Show who wrote it**
  A real author byline with relevant experience, linked to an author or team page.
- [ ] **Show a published date and a real updated date**
  Update the content when the facts change, not just the date.
- [ ] **Cite primary sources**
  Link to the regulation, standard or documentation, not to another blog summarising it.
- [ ] **Avoid invented quotes, fake reviews and bought mentions**
  They carry long-term risk for short-term gain.

- [ ] **Support text with good images and video**
  Original photos and diagrams, with alt text, captions and transcripts. Google says they create more ways to appear.

HOW TO CHECK

For each important page, ask: what does this page contain that a generic AI answer could not produce? If nothing, add it.

05 Make your business easy to identify

Systems need to connect a page, a brand and a set of facts. Inconsistent details create doubt.

- [ ] MUST DO **Keep business facts identical everywhere**
  Name, address, phone, services and hours on your site, Google Business Profile and major directories. Google specifically recommends keeping Business Profile and Merchant Center data current.

- [ ] **Add Organization structured data**
  Legal name, logo, URL, contact details and `sameAs` links to your official profiles.

- [ ] **Add Article, Product, LocalBusiness or FAQ markup only where it fits**
  The markup must match what is visible on the page. Google states there is no special schema for AI features, so use schema for its normal benefits.

- [ ] **Make About and Contact pages specific**
  Who you are, where you work, how long, and how to reach a human.

- [ ] **Build real-world mentions**
  Local press, industry associations, reviews and partners who describe what you do in their own words.

- [ ] **Keep product and price data accurate**
  Wrong prices or availability in AI answers cost trust.

HOW TO CHECK

Search your brand name in Google and ChatGPT. If the description is wrong or incomplete, fix the source pages it relies on.

06 Keep the technical basics strong

AI features sit on top of normal Search systems, so a page that is slow, broken or confusing is a weaker source.

- [ ] MUST DO **Make important content available without interaction**
  Do not hide the answer in tabs loaded by script, behind a login or in an image.

- [ ] **Use semantic HTML**
  Real headings, lists, tables and buttons; ARIA only when native elements cannot do the job.
- [ ] **Meet Core Web Vitals on mobile**
  Largest Contentful Paint under 2.5 s and Interaction to Next Paint under 200 ms.
- [ ] **Keep HTTPS and one canonical URL per page**
  Avoid near-duplicates.
- [ ] **Check that structured data matches the page**
  Validate it with Google's Rich Results Test and the Schema Markup Validator.
- [ ] **Use snippet controls deliberately**
  `nosnippet`, `data-nosnippet`, `max-snippet` and `noindex` limit what can be shown in Search, including AI features. Use them only for content you do not want shown.
- [ ] **Submit an XML sitemap**
  And monitor crawling and security issues in Search Console.

HOW TO CHECK

Fetch your page with JavaScript disabled (or view source). Your main answer should still be there.

07 Measure visibility in AI surfaces

Answers often appear without a click. Measure citations and outcomes, not only sessions.

- [ ] MUST DO **Build a prompt panel**
  10 to 20 real questions customers ask, run monthly in Google (AI Overviews and AI Mode), ChatGPT search, Perplexity and Copilot. Record whether you are cited, which URL and which competitors appear.
- [ ] MUST DO **Use Search Console for Google's AI features**
  Google counts traffic from AI Overviews and AI Mode in the Performance report under the "Web" search type; they are not reported separately.
- [ ] **Segment AI referrals in analytics**
  Look for referrals from chatgpt.com, perplexity.ai, copilot.microsoft.com and similar. Accept that many AI-assisted visits show as direct or branded search.
- [ ] **Track brand searches and assisted conversions**
  A rise in people searching your name after AI exposure is a real result.
- [ ] **Study the gap when a competitor is cited instead of you**
  Look for missing evidence, a less clear answer or weaker entity signals.
- [ ] **Refresh pages that already rank before creating new ones**
  Existing authority is easier to build on.

HOW TO CHECK

Keep the prompt panel in a spreadsheet with dates. A trend line over three months is more useful than any single result.

08 A 30-day action plan

You do not need a new department. Remove blockers, improve pages with proven demand, then measure.

- [ ] **Week 1: Audit crawl access**
  `robots.txt`, CDN and firewall rules for `Googlebot`, `Bingbot` and `OAI-SearchBot`; indexing, canonicals and sitemaps in Search Console.
- [ ] **Week 2: Rewrite your five most valuable pages**
  Direct answers, specific evidence, clear headings, current dates.
- [ ] **Week 3: Strengthen identity signals**
  Author pages, Organization and Article markup, and identical business details across your profiles.
- [ ] **Week 4: Publish one piece of original research**
  And set up the monthly prompt panel and a spreadsheet to track it.
- [ ] **Then repeat monthly**
  Review the panel, fix the weakest gap, refresh one important page.

HOW TO CHECK

At day 30, compare the prompt panel with your baseline from day 1 and list the three biggest remaining gaps.

Sources and further reading

Google Search Central: AI features and your website
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/ai-features

Google Search Central: Optimizing your website for generative AI features
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/fundamentals/ai-optimization-guide

Google Search Central: Spam policies
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/essentials/spam-policies

OpenAI: Overview of OpenAI crawlers
https://platform.openai.com/docs/bots

Need a hand with this?

Midnight Webs designs, secures and maintains websites for small businesses. Tell us what you need and we will scope it.

midnightwebs.com/estimate