



Fastr Guide to AI Search

Navigating SEO, GEO, and AEO in a
Rapidly Changing Search Landscape

Accurate as of: 11/2025



| Ask anything

Table of Contents

1. **Key Definitions: SEO, GEO, AEO**
 - 2.1 What SEO Really Means Today
 - 2.2 How GEO and AEO Differ from SEO
2. **How AI Search Engines Actually Work**
 - 3.1 High-Level Summary
 - 3.2 Technical Deep Dive (Full Pipeline)
3. **What Modern AI Search Engines Look For**
 - 4.1 What All Engines Have in Common
 - 4.2 Differences Across Major Platforms (Google, ChatGPT, Perplexity, etc.)
4. **How Brands Can Rank in AI Search**
 - 5.1 Overview & Framework
 - 5.2 Detailed Guidance for Each Layer
5. **Specific Tactics for Success**
6. **What Brands Should Avoid**
7. **Using AI to Create Content Safely**
8. **Actionable Checklists**
 - 8.1 AI Search Readiness Checklist
 - 8.2 Content Development Checklist
 - 8.3 Technical & Schema Checklist
9. **The AI-Native Experience Platform Built for Modern Search**

AI search is transforming how discovery works across the web. Instead of returning a list of links, AI search engines *read the web, evaluate sources, and generate answers*. Your brand's presence is no longer about simply ranking well — it's about being cited as trustworthy evidence.

Practically, this means:

- Visibility is no longer only about *ranking a webpage*.
- Brands must now be part of the *inputs* that AI uses to craft answers.
- Content must be written in a way machines can understand, verify, and defend.

This guide helps your team understand the mechanics behind search today (SEO) and the rapidly emerging world of generative search (GEO/AEO). Whether you're a marketer, executive, or product leader, this document provides both high-level clarity and technical depth to help future-proof your strategy.

1. Key Definitions: SEO, GEO, and AEO

1.1 SEO — Search Engine Optimization

SEO applies to *all* traditional search engines, including Google, Bing, Yahoo, DuckDuckGo, and niche vertical search engines.

Goal: Improve your visibility across any search engine's ranked results.

Key components:

- Technical site quality (crawlability, speed, indexation)
- Keyword and user-intent alignment
- Backlinks and mentions
- E-E-A-T (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trust)

Think of SEO as convincing any search engine to place your content prominently wherever users search.

1.2 AEO — Answer Engine Optimization

AEO focuses on becoming the source AI assistants quote when providing a direct answer. You want AI systems to *quote you* or use your content as a trusted source.

Where SEO tries to rank pages, AEO tries to:

- Earn citations in AI-powered answers
- Ensure brand information is accurate in conversational outputs

1.3 GEO — Generative Engine Optimization

GEO is similar to AEO but applies specifically to LLM-driven search engines that generate full responses (e.g., ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini). Where SEO optimizes pages for ranking, GEO optimizes *paragraphs, sentences, and structured content* for AI selection.

Goal: Ensure your content is selected as an input into an AI-generated answer.

2. How AI Search Engines Actually Work

2.1 Quick Summary

When someone asks an AI: “What are the best project management tools?”, the system doesn’t just guess. It typically:

1. **Interprets intent** - breaks the query into smaller internal questions.
2. **Retrieves relevant sources** - reads the web or its own index to find candidate passages.
3. **Ranks passages** - Scores passages based on relevance, clarity, trust, recency, and authority
4. **Plans an answer structure** – decides structure: bullets, steps, pros/cons
5. **Generates the response** - writes the answer using the selected passages
6. **Selects citations to surface** - picks which sources to show publicly

2.2 The Technical Deep Dive

AI search engines generally follow this pipeline:

1. Query Parsing & Intent Interpretation

- Converts natural language into structured “information needs.”
- Splits complex questions into sub-questions.

2. Retrieval (Hybrid Search)

Uses:

- Sparse retrieval (keywords)
- Dense retrieval (vector embeddings)
- Passage-level retrieval, not just full pages

3. Filtering & Scoring

Search engines evaluate:

- Relevance to the user query

- Topic and domain authority
- E-E-A-T alignment
- Freshness
- Safety and policy compliance

4. Evidence Selection & Diversification

Models intentionally:

- Pull from multiple domains
- Seek consensus viewpoints
- Downrank single-source or overly promotional content

5. Answer Planning

The model builds an outline: sections, lists, definitions.

6. Answer Generation

The LLM produces a response anchored in retrieved evidence.

7. Citation Assignment

AI systems:

- Choose which passages influenced the answer most
- Decide which sources are trustworthy enough to cite

3. What AI Engines Prefer

3.1 What All Engines Have in Common

Regardless of provider, AI search tends to favor:

- **Clear, structured content:** Such as Q&A blocks, short paragraphs, headings that match the content, lists and tables.
- **High-authority sources:** Such as concrete facts, numbers and examples, as well as clear definitions and process explanations. AI over weights things like news coverage, independent reviews, and high-authority blogs because these sources help AI systems confirm your brand is real, reputable, and safe to cite.
- **Fresh, accurate data:** Especially for fast-changing topics (AI, finance, regulations, products).
- **Precise, factual language:** AI engines are trained to avoid giving wrong or harmful answers, so they rely more heavily on trusted sources.

3.2 Variations Across Platforms

The following distinctions help brands optimize broadly:

Google AI Overviews / SGE

- Heavy reliance on existing Google search rankings
- Strong preference for structured data (FAQ, HowTo, Product)
- Elevates expert content with schema

Bing / Microsoft Copilot

- Prioritizes block-level clarity
- Prefers precise factual statements
- Uses a structured Q&A-driven retrieval model

ChatGPT (with browsing)

- Research-style synthesis
- Cites sources transparently
- Favors high-authority earned media

Perplexity

- Aggressively citation-oriented
- Trusts third-party reviewers and niche authority blogs

Gemini (Google)

- Similar preferences to Google SGE
- Optimization influenced by Google Search ranking + web authority

4. How Brands Can Rank in AI Search

Introductory Overview

Ranking in AI search is no longer about one metric or one ranking system. It's a stack of probabilities, each one determining whether you show up in the final answer.

4.1 The Four-Layer Framework

Layer 1 — Crawl & Index Probability

AI systems must be able to *access and read* your content:

- Clean HTML

- Functional sitemaps
- No blocked content
- Minimize JavaScript rendering requirements, as some AI crawlers struggle with JavaScript-heavy sites.

Layer 2 — Eligibility Probability

Your domain must appear trustworthy, policy-safe, and non-spammy.

Layer 3 — Selection Probability

Your content must be chosen as evidence. This happens at the passage-level:

- Answer a micro-question fully
- Use structured formatting
- Contain concrete details

Layer 4 — Citation Probability

Even if used internally, the system may or may not cite you unless your content meets high standards:

- Your wording is clear, quotable, and precise
- Your brand is mentioned consistently across the web
- You appear in multiple independent sources

4.2 Detailed Guidance

Crawlability

- Ensure your site structure is clean and indexable.

Eligibility

- Maintain consistent, credible brand presence across the web.

Selection

- Write in machine-friendly formats: tight paragraphs, definitions, lists.

Citation

- Use clear brand mentions.
- Publish proprietary expertise (case studies, data, insights).

5. Specific Tactics for Success

- Write “machine-liftable” content (self-contained blocks). AI systems want blocks they can copy/paste into an answer:

- One idea per paragraph
- FAQ sections
- Comparison tables
- “Definition → Example → Caveat” structures
- Use aggressive, meaningful headings
- Publish original data and real experience to strengthen E-E-A-T:
 - Detailed case studies
 - Real data
 - Expert authors with bios
 - Customer stories
- Earn authoritative third-party coverage. Because AI search engines overweight earned media:
 - Pitch thought leadership
 - Contribute expert quotes
 - Be included in category roundups
 - Make sure external sites use your full brand name
- Use structured data consistently. Schema markup helps AI trust what it reads:
 - FAQPage
 - HowTo
 - Product
 - Organization
 - Article
- Avoid overly promotional language. AI models dislike vague marketing adjectives. They prefer:
 - Plain language
 - Specifics over hype
 - Direct answers

6. What Brands Should Avoid

- Mass-produced AI content with thin value. Search engines explicitly consider this spam. Avoid:
 - Thousands of thin AI-generated pages
 - Long lists of “city pages” with no unique value
 - Rewritten competitor content
- Never use misleading E-E-A-T:
 - Fake credentials
 - Fabricate experts
 - Publish YMYL (health, finance) content without qualified reviewers

- Over-structured but content-empty pages. AI models can detect 'structured fluff' (content with headings but no depth).
- Topic areas outside your domain expertise

7. Using AI to Create Content Safely

Search Engines DO NOT Punish AI content.

They punish *low-value* content, not AI usage.

Safe workflow:

1. Use AI for brainstorming, outlines, tone adjustments.
2. Add proprietary insights: real data, customer stories, team expertise.
3. Human review and fact-check.
4. Publish under a real human author.

About AI detectors

They are unreliable, produce false positives, and should not be your optimization target. Focus on authenticity, value, and unique insight.

8. Actionable Checklists

8.1 AI Search Readiness Checklist

- Site is crawlable and indexable
- Key pages have structured data (FAQ, HowTo, Product)
- E-E-A-T is clearly demonstrated
- Brand is mentioned consistently across third-party sites

8.2 Content Development Checklist

- Each paragraph answers one micro-question
- Pages contain examples, data, and specifics
- FAQ sections included where relevant
- Content is fresh and accurately dated

8.3 Schema & Technical Checklist

- FAQPage schema valid
- Product schema consistent with on-page content
- Internal linking is logical and hierarchical

9. The AI-Native Experience Platform Built for Modern Search

AI search moves faster than traditional stacks can keep up with. If your site isn't fast, structured, and continuously optimized, you disappear from both search engines *and* AI-generated answers.

Fastr Workspace fixes that.

It gives enterprise commerce teams the speed, clarity, and autonomy they need to stay visible – no matter how AI changes discovery. Fastr unifies creation, optimization, testing, and performance in one AI-native platform, so digital teams can adapt instantly – without developers, without scripts, and without replatforming.

What Fastr Gives You

Fastr unifies experience creation, conversion optimization, and performance in one AI-native platform:

Fastr Frontend (DXP)

Launch, update, personalize, and test content across every page – all with a hydration-free, performance-first architecture built for SEO, GEO, and AI search visibility.

Fastr Optimize (CRO)

See exactly where your site leaks revenue, and what to fix, with AI-driven insights, zero tagging, and instant diagnosis.

Together, they give you **Insight** → **Action** → **Measurable Growth** at a speed no legacy stack can match.

Why Leading Brands Choose Fastr

- **AI-native architecture** that keeps your site visible in AI-generated answers
- **Insight + execution** in one workspace – fix issues instantly
- **No dev bottlenecks** – publish, test, and personalize in minute
- **Performance that search engines and LLMs love** – clean HTML, live text, and zero JS bloat
- **Works with any backend** – no replatforming required

This is the experience layer built for the AI era – and the fastest way to stay visible, competitive, and conversion-ready.