

The AEO Audit Checklist for 2026

1. Answer-first content

- ☐ Front-load a direct, quotable answer in the first 1-2 sentences of each page
- ☐ Keep the core answer to roughly 40-60 words so it is snippet-sized
- ☐ Write self-contained paragraphs that make sense lifted out of context
- ☐ Lead with the definition or direct answer before you elaborate
- ☐ Answer in plain language, at the reading level the query implies

2. Structure for extraction

- ☐ Use the real question as the H2/H3 and put the answer directly beneath it
- ☐ Use lists, steps, and tables for how-to and comparison queries
- ☐ Target the question formats that trigger snippets and People Also Ask
- ☐ Add a concise TL;DR or key-takeaways block near the top
- ☐ Keep every section able to stand alone, since answer engines lift passages rather than whole pages
- ☐ Put comparison data in a real HTML table instead of describing it in prose

3. Markup & eligibility

- ☐ Add FAQ, HowTo, and Article structured data where relevant
- ☐ Ensure the answer content is server-rendered, not hidden behind JavaScript
- ☐ Use descriptive headings that match how people phrase the question
- ☐ Check the answer is not gated behind a tab, accordion, or click-to-expand
- ☐ Confirm Googlebot can fetch the page and the resources it needs to render

4. Entity & trust signals

- ☐ Put a named author with real, checkable credentials on every answer page
- ☐ Show the publish and last-updated dates where a reader can see them
- ☐ Cite a primary source for every statistic and link out to it
- ☐ Keep your organisation name, description, and sameAs links consistent sitewide

5. Google's answer surfaces

- ☐ Cover the follow-up questions on the same page so one page answers the cluster
- ☐ Support claims with specific numbers, dates, and cited sources
- ☐ Keep content fresh so it stays eligible as answers get regenerated
- ☐ Read the AI Overview a query actually returns before writing against it
- ☐ Write for query fan-out: AI Overviews and AI Mode split one question into several sub-queries

6. Audit & measurement

- ☐ Score each page against this list and fix the failures before publishing anything new
- ☐ Track which queries you own the featured snippet or PAA answer for
- ☐ Use Search Console's generative AI performance report for AI Overview and AI Mode impressions
- ☐ Compare AI surface impressions against clicks to see where answers replace visits
- ☐ Double down on the formats that win answer placements
- ☐ Re-audit quarterly, since answer formats change faster than rankings do

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