

FREE STARTER GUIDE

# AI SEO Starter Guide: Rank on Google and Get Cited in AI

How to optimize your website for Google Search, AI Overviews, ChatGPT, and Perplexity — the 2026 framework for Canadian businesses.

DIGITAL ESTATE MEDIA

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**Why this matters now:** Google AI Overviews appear in 50%+ of commercial queries. ChatGPT and Perplexity are answering "who is the best service provider in city" questions directly. Businesses with strong SEO foundations are being cited. Businesses without them are invisible in both channels.

## PART 1 — THE FOUNDATION (TRADITIONAL SEO STILL RUNS EVERYTHING)

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- Technical SEO complete — no crawl errors, fast load, mobile-optimized**  
AI crawlers respect the same crawl rules as Googlebot. A blocked or slow site won't be cited regardless of content quality.
- AI crawler access allowed in robots.txt (GPTBot, PerplexityBot, ClaudeBot, Applebot)**  
Default robots.txt settings often inadvertently block AI crawlers. Explicitly allow all major AI crawlers.
- llms.txt file created at domain root listing key pages and their purpose**  
An emerging standard helping AI systems understand your site structure quickly. URL + one-line description per key page.

**Core pages have comprehensive schema: Organization, Service, FAQPage, LocalBusiness**

Schema is machine-readable data both Google and AI systems use to understand your content without ambiguity.

**Key pages are comprehensive (1000+ words), well-structured, with specific data points**

Shallow pages get skipped. Depth, accuracy, and specificity build AI citation trust.

## PART 2 – GEO: GENERATIVE ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

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### STEP 01

#### **Write definitive answers to questions buyers ask in your category**

AI systems are answer machines. They cite sources that contain clear, direct, well-structured answers. Create content that answers your buyers' top questions definitively.

**Action: Identify 10 "what/how/why" questions. Create dedicated content answering each one.**

### STEP 02

#### **Use structured formatting: H2/H3 headers, bullet lists, tables, short paragraphs**

LLMs extract information by parsing document structure. Wall-of-text content gets passed over. Use question-format headers and structured lists for processes and comparisons.

**Action: Audit your top 5 pages. Add question-format H2s. Convert walls of text to structured lists.**

### STEP 03

#### **Build third-party mentions and citations**

AI systems trust sources they've seen cited by other trusted sources. Brand mentions in industry publications, review platforms, and authoritative directories increase your citation probability significantly.

**Action: Target 3 industry publication guest posts or mentions per quarter.**

### STEP 04

## **Include specific, verifiable data points — not vague generalizations**

AI systems prefer statistics, dates, specific numbers, and named examples.

"Most businesses see results in a few months" is weak. "Most businesses see initial movement within 60-90 days" gets cited.

**Action: Add at least 3 specific data points with sources to every key service page.**

## PART 3 – PLATFORM-SPECIFIC OPTIMIZATION

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Each AI platform has different crawl, indexing, and citation preferences. Optimize for all four.

- Google AI Overviews: rank in top 10 + comprehensive FAQPage schema + passage-level answers**

AI Overviews primarily cite pages that already rank. Getting into the top 10 is the prerequisite. FAQPage schema and direct answer passages increase inclusion rate.
- ChatGPT / GPT-4o Search: high domain authority + mentions in authoritative sources + Bing indexed**

ChatGPT browses via Bing. Being cited in Wikipedia, industry publications, and authoritative directories increases citation probability significantly.
- Perplexity AI: fresh, well-structured content with clear factual claims updated frequently**

Perplexity aggressively crawls and is very citation-forward — sources are shown prominently. Update frequency and factual specificity matter most.
- Bing Copilot: Bing Webmaster Tools verified, sitemap submitted, strong Bing SEO**

Copilot is powered by GPT-4 with the Bing index. Many businesses ignore Bing entirely — this leaves significant AI citation opportunity uncaptured.

## PART 4 – MEASUREMENT CHECKLIST

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- Google Search Console set up with all key pages indexed**

GSC shows which queries trigger AI Overview appearances under Performance - Search Type - AI Overviews.
- Monthly brand mention audit in ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Google AI Overviews**

Manually query each platform for your top commercial terms. Track whether your brand is cited and on which queries.
- GA4 referral traffic from AI sources tracked (perplexity.ai, chat.openai.com)**

Add these as referral sources to monitor. Traffic from AI platforms is growing. Knowing which pages drive it informs content strategy.
- Bing Webmaster Tools verified and sitemap submitted**

ChatGPT and Copilot use Bing's index. Submit your sitemap to Bing the same day you submit to Google.
- Content freshness plan: key pages reviewed and updated quarterly**

Stale content loses AI citations faster than it loses Google rankings. Schedule quarterly content audits for your top-cited pages.

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