

The Answer-Ready Content Playbook

A practical guide for businesses that want to provide clearer answers, stronger information and a more useful website.



Your customers have questions. Is your business helping answer them?

For years, businesses have worked to appear in search results. A customer typed a question into Google, looked through the results, visited a few websites and pieced together an answer. That journey still exists, but it is no longer the only one.

Today someone can ask ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini or an AI-powered search service a detailed question and receive a response that brings information together from different sources. They might ask:

"What's the difference between double and triple glazing, and which is better for a kitchen extension?"

"What should I look for when choosing an accountant for a small ecommerce business?"

"How much does a loft conversion typically cost in London, and what affects the price?"

These aren't simply keywords. They're real questions from people trying to understand something, compare their options or make a decision; and they create an important opportunity for businesses that publish genuinely useful answers.

TWO WAYS TO APPROACH THE SAME QUESTION

The question: *"What's the difference between double and triple glazing?"*

WEBSITE A · PROMOTIONAL

"We provide premium glazing solutions using the latest technology, delivering exceptional quality, performance and customer satisfaction."

It sounds professional; but it hasn't answered the question.

WEBSITE B · ANSWER-READY

"Double glazing uses two panes of glass; triple glazing uses three. Triple glazing can provide better thermal and sound insulation depending on the full specification. Double glazing is generally lighter and less expensive. The right choice depends on the project, installation requirements and performance priorities."

Explains the difference, provides context, acknowledges the answer depends on circumstances.

THE IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

Being online isn't the same as being useful in an answer. AI systems don't automatically use content simply because it's published. Different systems discover, retrieve, select and generate information in different ways; but clear, specific, accurate information gives both people and machines more to work with than vague promotional language. That's where Answer Engine Optimisation begins.

THE TAKEAWAY

**Don't just tell customers you're an expert.
Give them answers that demonstrate it.**

Next: *What exactly is AEO, and how does it differ from SEO and GEO?*

What is Answer Engine Optimisation?

Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO) is the practice of making information easier for search engines and AI-powered systems to find, understand and use when answering people's questions. Rather than focusing solely on where a webpage appears in search results, AEO considers whether the information on that page can contribute to a useful, accurate answer.

A traditional service page might focus on persuading someone that a company is experienced, reliable and professional. An answer-ready page goes further: it explains what the service involves, who it is suitable for, what choices customers face and what they need to know before making a decision.

The aim isn't simply to be mentioned by AI. It's to publish information worth using.

SEO, AEO AND GEO · WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

SEO

Search Engine Optimisation

Can people find your website through search?

Technical accessibility, relevant content, site quality, authority and other factors that affect visibility in search engines.

AEO

Answer Engine Optimisation

Can your content help answer the question?

Clear explanations, direct answers, useful structure, accuracy and supporting evidence that make information easier to retrieve and use.

GEO

Generative Engine Optimisation

How is your information represented in AI-generated discovery?

Whether AI systems can discover, understand, describe, cite or potentially recommend an organisation, product or service.

These are overlapping approaches, not three completely separate sets of rules. The terminology is still evolving, and different organisations use AEO and GEO in different ways.

Continues on the next page →

What does good AEO content look like?

Imagine a customer asks: "Do I need planning permission for a roof lantern?"

A WEAK PAGE

"We offer beautiful roof lanterns designed to enhance any property. Contact our friendly team for advice."

A STRONGER ANSWER

Planning permission depends on the property, the proposed work and applicable rules. The page identifies the relevant considerations, points to official guidance and makes clear when professional advice may be needed.

THE FIVE FOUNDATIONS OF ANSWER-READY CONTENT

- 01 DIRECT** Answer the question without making readers search through paragraphs of marketing copy.
- 02 CLEAR** Use straightforward language, descriptive headings and explanations that stand on their own.
- 03 SPECIFIC** Include meaningful details, examples, conditions and distinctions rather than generic claims.
- 04 CREDIBLE** Support important statements with relevant evidence, expertise or reliable sources.
- 05 CURRENT** Review information that changes; particularly prices, regulations, product details and guidance.

THE TAKEAWAY

AEO isn't about finding the right words to impress an algorithm.

It's about giving people better answers; and making them easier for machines to use.

Next: The five questions every business should be answering.

The best content starts with a better question.

Before someone becomes a customer, they usually need answers. They want to understand their options, compare alternatives, work out what something costs or decide whether a particular solution is right for them. These questions reveal what someone actually needs to know before making a decision.

And yet, many business websites spend far more time describing how wonderful the company is than answering the questions customers came with. Your first AEO task isn't to write more content; it's to discover which questions deserve better answers.

FIVE TYPES OF CUSTOMER QUESTIONS

- 01 UNDERSTANDING** *What is it, and how does it work?*
"What is the difference between a roof window and a roof lantern?"
- 02 COMPARISON** *Which option is better for my needs?*
"Is double or triple glazing better for a kitchen extension?"
- 03 COST** *What should I expect to pay, and why?*
"What affects the price of a made-to-measure roof window?"
- 04 SUITABILITY** *Is this the right solution for my situation?*
"Can I install a roof lantern on an existing flat roof?"
- 05 DECISION** *What should I check before choosing?*
"What should I ask before ordering made-to-measure glazing?"

These categories are a practical way to organise your research, not a formal AI ranking system.

Continues on the next page →

Your turn · the five-question exercise.

Write five genuine questions a potential customer might ask before choosing your product or service.

Try to cover different stages of their decision.

01

02

03

04

05

YOUR PRIORITY QUESTION

Which comes up frequently, matters to a purchasing decision, and deserves a clearer answer than your website currently provides?

THE TAKEAWAY

Don't begin with the keywords you want to rank for.

Begin with the questions your customers genuinely need answered.

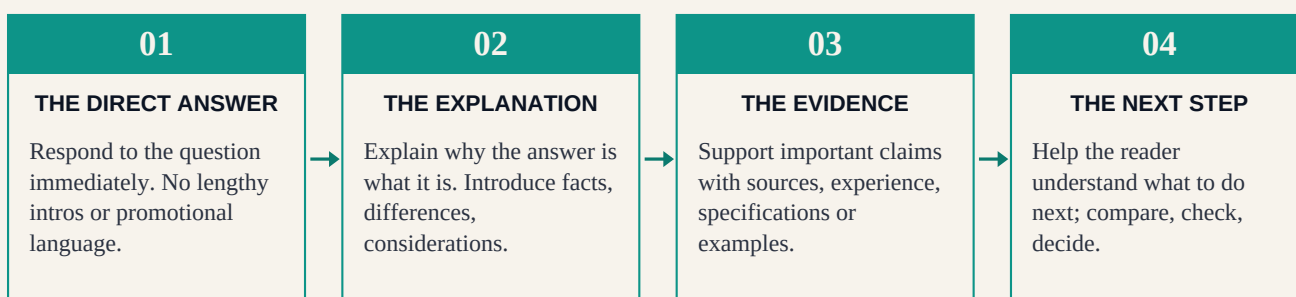
Next: Turn your priority question into content that's clear, useful and answer-ready.

Stop writing around the answer. Start with it.

You've identified a question your customers genuinely care about. Many websites make visitors work far too hard to find useful information: they introduce the company, describe their commitment to excellence, list vague benefits and eventually, if the reader is lucky, address the original question.

Answer-ready content takes a different approach. Give the reader a useful answer first; then provide the explanation, evidence and detail they need to make sense of it.

THE ANSWER-FIRST METHOD



SEE THE DIFFERENCE

Customer question: "Is triple glazing worth the extra cost?"

BEFORE · VAGUE MARKETING

"We offer high-quality double and triple glazing solutions designed to deliver outstanding comfort, performance and value. Our expert team can help you find the perfect glazing for your property."

Describes the business without explaining the choice.

AFTER · ANSWER-READY

"Triple glazing can be worth the additional cost when improved thermal or sound insulation is a priority. It uses three panes rather than two, but performance depends on the full specification. Triple glazing is also heavier and more expensive, so double glazing may be more practical for some projects."

Answers directly, explains the trade-offs, avoids suggesting one option is always best.

Continues on the next page →

Write your first answer.

Return to the priority question you selected on page 4.

MY CUSTOMER'S QUESTION

01 THE DIRECT ANSWER · IN ONE OR TWO SENTENCES

02 THE EXPLANATION · DETAILS, CONDITIONS, COMPARISONS

03 THE EVIDENCE · SPECIFICATIONS, EXPERTISE, EXAMPLES, SOURCES

04 THE NEXT STEP · WHAT GENUINELY HELPS THE READER NEXT

THE 30-SECOND TEST

If someone read only your first two sentences, would they understand the main point?

If not, rewrite the opening.

THE TAKEAWAY

A good answer doesn't just sound authoritative.

It gives the reader enough information to decide whether it applies to them.

Next: How to structure your website content so important answers are easier to find.

A great answer is only useful if people can find it.

You've identified an important customer question and drafted a useful answer. Now give that answer a proper home. A common website mistake is burying useful information inside lengthy service pages, vague headings or blocks of promotional copy.

Someone looking for a specific answer shouldn't have to read half your website to find it. And when AI-powered systems retrieve information from a page, clear structure can make the content easier to interpret. The goal isn't to create pages for robots; it's to organise useful information so its meaning is immediately clear.

THE ANATOMY OF AN ANSWER-READY PAGE

01 A CLEAR PAGE TITLE

Tell readers exactly what the page covers. "Double vs Triple Glazing: What's the Difference?" works better than "Discover the Difference".

02 THE ANSWER UP FRONT

Provide a short, direct answer near the beginning. Don't force readers through your company history first.

03 USEFUL SUPPORTING HEADINGS

Break the explanation into the questions a reader naturally asks next: how it works, what makes it different, which option suits them, what to check before ordering.

04 FACTS, EXAMPLES AND EVIDENCE

Include specifications, comparisons, practical examples and supporting sources. Avoid unsupported superlatives such as "the best" or "guaranteed performance".

05 A RELEVANT NEXT STEP

Help the reader continue naturally. The next step should follow the reader's question, not interrupt the answer with an unrelated sales pitch.

Continues on the next page →

A simple page blueprint.

H1	Double vs Triple Glazing: What's the Difference?
OPENING	<i>A concise explanation of the main difference.</i>
H2	How Double Glazing Works
BODY	Construction and characteristics.
H2	How Triple Glazing Works
BODY	Additional pane and characteristics.
H2	Comparing the Options
BODY	Cost, weight, insulation, suitability.
H2	Which Should You Choose?
BODY	Factors that affect the decision.
H2	Related Questions
NEXT	<i>Explore the glazing options.</i>

READS AS

One page.
 One customer question.
 A direct answer first.
 A clear structure.
 Evidence where it matters.
 A natural next step.

An example of a useful structure, not a mandatory template for every webpage.

YOUR TURN · PLAN YOUR PAGE

Use the priority question and draft answer from pages 5–6.

MY PAGE TITLE

MY OPENING ANSWER

THREE SUPPORTING HEADINGS

EVIDENCE OR EXAMPLES TO INCLUDE

THE MOST USEFUL NEXT STEP

Schema markup can describe content in a machine-readable format; it doesn't make weak content useful or guarantee inclusion in AI answers. Get the content right first.

THE TAKEAWAY

One well-organised page that genuinely answers a customer's question can beat several pages of generic promotional content.

Next: How to make your answers credible, not just convincing.

Anyone can make a claim. Can you back yours up?

A clear answer is a good start, but clarity alone doesn't make information reliable.

Imagine two companies explaining the same service. One says: "We're the leading specialists in our field, delivering unmatched quality and exceptional results." The other explains its experience, identifies the relevant qualifications, describes completed projects and provides evidence supporting its claims. The second gives readers more to evaluate. Credibility comes from showing what supports an answer, not from sounding confident.

This matters to customers making decisions. It can also make information easier to assess when AI-powered systems encounter it. However, no amount of supporting evidence guarantees that a particular AI system will use or recommend your content.

FIVE WAYS TO STRENGTHEN AN ANSWER

01 USE VERIFIABLE FACTS

Specifications, published prices or clearly explained pricing factors, service locations, qualifications, documented features. Make sure the information is accurate and current.

02 SHOW RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Demonstrate how your knowledge applies in practice. Specific examples are more informative than broad claims of expertise.

03 REFERENCE RELIABLE SOURCES

Some answers need evidence beyond your own experience. Official guidance, technical standards, original research and reputable professional sources may help support important statements.

04 ACKNOWLEDGE LIMITATIONS

Not every question has one universally correct answer. Explain when the answer depends on circumstances, specifications, location, budget or other factors.

05 KEEP INFORMATION UP TO DATE

Outdated information undermines an otherwise excellent answer. Review content involving prices, regulations, product availability and technical requirements.

Continues on the next page →

Audit your own answer.

BEFORE AND AFTER · THE EVIDENCE TEST

WEAK CLAIM

"Our glazing delivers outstanding energy efficiency."

STRONGER APPROACH

"The thermal performance of a glazed roof window depends on factors including the glazing unit, frame, installation and overall specification. When comparing products, ask for the declared thermal performance figures rather than assuming an extra pane always guarantees a better result."

YOUR TURN · AUDIT YOUR OWN ANSWER

Return to the answer you drafted on pages 7–8.

MY MAIN CLAIM

WHAT SUPPORTS IT? SOURCE, SPECIFICATION, EXPERIENCE

WHAT IS MISSING?

MY IMPROVED CLAIM ACCURATE, SPECIFIC, SUPPORTED

THE CREDIBILITY CHECKLIST

- ☐ Can I substantiate the important factual claims?
- ☐ Have I distinguished facts from opinions?
- ☐ Are relevant qualifications or limitations explained?
- ☐ Are my sources appropriate and reliable?
- ☐ Is the information still current?
- ☐ Would a customer understand why they should trust this answer?

THE TAKEAWAY

Don't just sound like an authority.

Demonstrate why your information deserves trust.

Next: How machines interpret information on a website, and how to make yours clearer.

Your website makes sense to you. Does it make sense to machines?

When someone visits your website, they can usually work out what they're looking at. They recognise your company name, understand which pages describe products or services, and distinguish a customer review from a company description. Machines can interpret much of this information too; clear structure helps reduce ambiguity. That's where structured data comes in.

Structured data is a standardised way of describing information on a webpage so compatible systems can interpret it more consistently. One widely used vocabulary is Schema.org, commonly implemented using JSON-LD. It can help identify what a page is about, which organisation it represents, and how particular pieces of information relate to one another.

But there's an important distinction: structured data describes information. It doesn't automatically prove that information is accurate, authoritative or worthy of recommendation.

WHAT CAN STRUCTURED DATA DESCRIBE?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 01 ORGANISATION | Identifies the organisation behind a website, including relevant business information. |
| 02 LOCAL BUSINESS | Describes a business's location, contact details and other applicable local information. |
| 03 PRODUCT | Describes products and their properties, including relevant offers and availability where supported. |
| 04 ARTICLE | Identifies editorial content and details such as headline, author and publication date. |
| 05 BREADCRUMBS | Describes a page's position within the website's navigation structure. |

Use markup that accurately reflects the visible content. Don't add every schema type simply because it appears on an AEO checklist.

Continues on the next page →

Three misunderstandings, one quick check.

THREE COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS

MYTH 01 *"Schema makes AI recommend my business."*

No. Structured data can improve machine-readable clarity, but it doesn't guarantee an AI citation or recommendation.

MYTH 02 *"Every FAQ needs FAQ schema."*

No. FAQ structured data is not universally appropriate or eligible for enhanced search features. The value of a useful FAQ page doesn't depend on adding FAQ markup.

MYTH 03 *"More schema means better AEO."*

No. Correct, relevant markup is more useful than excessive or misleading markup.

QUICK CHECK · YOUR WEBSITE

Review one important page on your website.

PAGE URL

WHAT DOES THE PAGE REPRESENT?

☐ Organisation or business

☐ Product

☐ Service information

☐ Article or guide

☐ Other

Main information clearly visible to visitors?

☐ Yes

☐ Partly

☐ No

Does the page contain structured data?

☐ Yes

☐ Partly

☐ No

Is anything inaccurate or missing?

☐ Yes

☐ Partly

☐ No

THE TAKEAWAY

Structured data can describe your content.

Good content gives that description something worthwhile to represent.

Next: How to answer the questions that influence real decisions.

A good answer informs. A great answer helps someone decide.

Not every customer question asks for a simple fact. Sometimes the person asking already understands the basics; what they really need is help comparing options, understanding trade-offs or deciding what is right for their circumstances.

"What is triple glazing?" needs an explanation.

"Is triple glazing worth paying more for in my kitchen extension?" needs an explanation and a judgement framework.

The second involves cost, insulation, weight, installation requirements and the customer's priorities. This is where genuinely useful content can stand apart from generic marketing copy.

THE DECISION-READY ANSWER FRAMEWORK

WHAT?	WHY?	WHEN?	WHAT CHANGES THE ANSWER?	WHAT NEXT?
What are the available choices?	Why might someone choose one over another?	Under what circumstances is each option suitable?	Which costs, conditions, limitations or requirements matter?	What should the customer check or do before deciding?

You won't need every element for every question, but the framework helps expose gaps in an incomplete answer.

Continues on the next page →

Build a decision-ready answer.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Customer question: "Should I choose a manual or electric opening roof window?"

BEFORE · PROMOTIONAL

"Our manual and electric roof windows offer excellent quality and stylish designs to suit your home. Contact us to discuss your requirements."

AFTER · DECISION-READY

"Manual opening windows suit easy-to-reach positions where you want a simple way to introduce ventilation. Electric opening windows offer powered operation, more convenient for high ceilings or difficult-to-reach positions. The right choice depends on accessibility, budget and installation requirements."

YOUR TURN · BUILD A DECISION-READY ANSWER

Think of a question customers ask when comparing two products, services or approaches.

MY CUSTOMER'S QUESTION

THE OPTIONS BEING COMPARED

THE MAIN DIFFERENCE

WHEN EACH OPTION MAKES SENSE

IMPORTANT COSTS, CONDITIONS OR LIMITATIONS

WHAT THE CUSTOMER SHOULD DO NEXT

THE TAKEAWAY

**The most useful content doesn't always give one definitive answer.
Sometimes it explains why the right answer depends on the person asking.**

Next: How to demonstrate expertise without relying on empty claims.

"We're experts" isn't evidence. Show people why.

Visit almost any business website and you'll find familiar phrases: "industry-leading specialists", "decades of combined experience", "unrivalled expertise". These statements tell readers very little unless they're supported by something meaningful.

What does the business actually know? What has it done? What problems can it solve? And what evidence supports its claims? These questions matter to customers evaluating a business. They also matter when thinking about the credibility of information AI-powered systems may encounter.

AEO isn't about sounding more authoritative; it's about making genuine knowledge easier to recognise and understand.

FIVE WAYS TO DEMONSTRATE EXPERTISE

01 EXPLAIN THE DETAILS OTHERS OVERLOOK

A genuine specialist can often explain the considerations that make a decision more complicated than it first appears. Specificity demonstrates understanding far more effectively than calling yourself an expert.

02 SHOW HOW YOU APPROACH PROBLEMS

Describe your process: what information you gather, what options you consider, what affects your recommendation. A useful explanation helps customers understand the work behind a service.

03 USE REAL EXAMPLES

Document completed projects, common scenarios or genuine customer questions. Explain the problem, constraints, approach and outcome. Protect confidential information and obtain permission.

04 IDENTIFY THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE KNOWLEDGE

Where relevant, explain who creates or reviews specialist content. Include accurate backgrounds, qualifications and experience. Don't invent credentials.

05 KNOW WHEN TO QUALIFY AN ANSWER

Expertise includes recognising where an answer depends on circumstances. That is often more useful than presenting an oversimplified answer with absolute certainty.

Continues on the next page →

From claim to evidence.

GENERIC CLAIM

"We are leading specialists in ecommerce accounting."

MORE INFORMATIVE VERSION

"We work with ecommerce businesses that sell through platforms such as Shopify and Amazon. Our services include bookkeeping, VAT support and financial reporting. Where businesses trade internationally, we assess their circumstances to identify the accounting and tax questions that require attention."

An illustrative example, not a verified description of a real firm. Businesses should only publish claims that accurately reflect their services and experience.

YOUR TURN · FIND YOUR EVIDENCE

Choose one important claim from your website.

OUR CURRENT CLAIM

WHAT DO WE ACTUALLY DO THAT SUPPORTS IT?

WHAT EXPERIENCE, EXAMPLES OR QUALIFICATIONS CAN WE SHOW?

OUR IMPROVED DESCRIPTION

THE EXPERTISE TEST

- ☐ Have we described what we actually do?
- ☐ Can we demonstrate relevant experience?
- ☐ Are our qualifications and claims accurate?
- ☐ Have we included useful examples or explanations?
- ☐ Would someone understand our specialism without already knowing our business?

THE TAKEAWAY

Expertise becomes more useful when you explain it, demonstrate it and support it with real evidence.

Before you create more content, find out what needs fixing.

Many businesses assume improving their visibility means publishing more. More articles, more FAQs, more landing pages, more content about the same subjects. But publishing more isn't automatically better. Your website may already contain valuable information that's difficult to find, poorly structured, outdated or buried beneath generic marketing language.

Sometimes the most useful AEO improvement is rewriting a page you already have.

THE FIVE-POINT CONTENT AUDIT

01 DOES IT ANSWER A REAL QUESTION?

Can you identify the main question or customer need the page addresses? A page without a clear purpose can become a collection of loosely related marketing messages.

02 IS THE ANSWER EASY TO FIND?

Can someone understand the main point without searching through several paragraphs? Look for descriptive headings, direct explanations and sensible organisation.

03 IS THE INFORMATION SPECIFIC?

Does the page provide useful details, comparisons, examples or explanations? Or could the same copy appear on almost any competitor's website?

04 ARE IMPORTANT CLAIMS SUPPORTED?

Check specifications, statistics, professional claims, prices and other factual statements. Identify anything that needs evidence, clarification or updating.

05 DOES IT HELP THE READER MOVE FORWARD?

After reading the page, does someone know what to consider or do next? A useful next step might be a related guide, a product comparison or an appropriate enquiry.

Continues on the next page →

Score your page.

Give each category a score from 0 to 2. 0 = missing or poor, 1 = partly addressed, 2 = clear and useful.

Answers a real question	___ / 2
Answer is easy to find	___ / 2
Information is specific	___ / 2
Important claims are supported	___ / 2
Provides a useful next step	___ / 2
TOTAL	___ / 10

HOW TO INTERPRET YOUR RESULT

0–3	MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED	The page may lack a clear purpose, useful answers or supporting information.
4–6	A GOOD CANDIDATE FOR REVISION	Some useful content exists, but important gaps remain.
7–8	STRONG FOUNDATIONS	Focus on the weaker areas and check accuracy.
9–10	WELL PREPARED	Meets the basic content-quality criteria; keep reviewing as information changes.

A self-assessment tool, not a scientifically validated AEO score or a prediction of whether AI will cite your page.

Continues on the next page →

Audit three pages and decide what to do next.

Choose three existing pages that matter to your customers.

PAGE	SCORE /10	MAIN IMPROVEMENT
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____

DECIDE WHAT TO DO NEXT

KEEP AND IMPROVE	Serves a useful purpose but needs clearer answers, stronger evidence or better structure.
EXPAND	Answers an important question but lacks enough detail to help readers properly.
COMBINE	Several pages repeat the same information and could be consolidated.
UPDATE	Content is useful but contains outdated facts, prices, links or guidance.
CREATE	An important customer question isn't adequately answered anywhere on your website.

YOUR FIRST CONTENT PRIORITY · THE PAGE I WILL IMPROVE FIRST

THE MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM TO FIX

THE ACTION I WILL TAKE

THE TAKEAWAY

Better content doesn't always mean more content.

Improve what exists; publish new work only where there is a real gap.

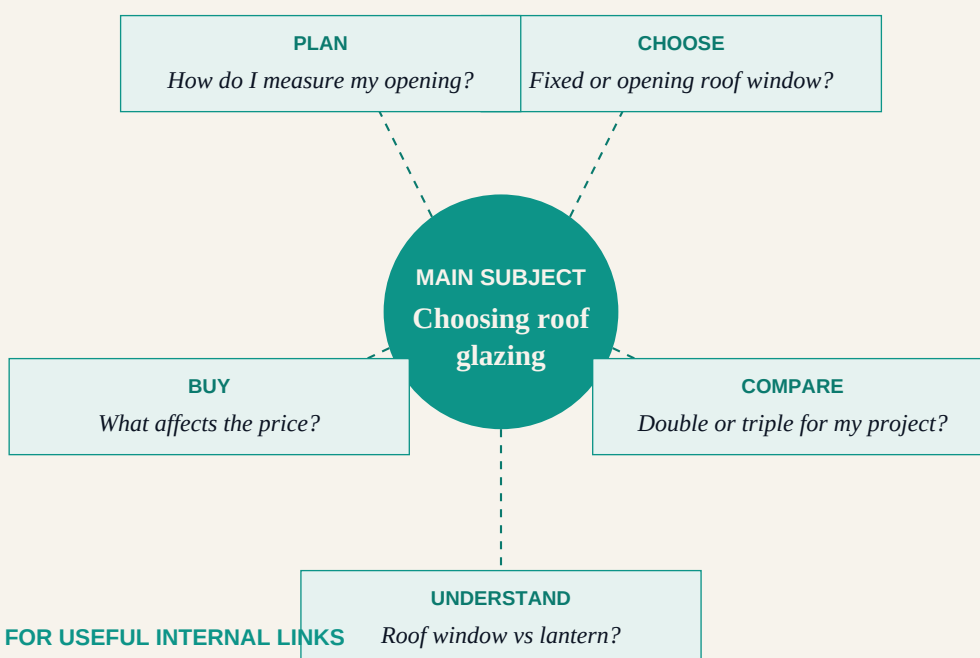
Next: How to connect related answers so customers can explore a subject.

One good answer is useful. A connected collection is better.

Someone visits your website to understand the difference between double and triple glazing. Your page gives them a clear explanation. But now they have another question. And another. "Which option is better for my kitchen extension?" "What affects the cost?" "How do I measure the opening before ordering?"

These are connected questions that arise naturally as someone moves towards a decision. If your website answers them across several logically connected pages, visitors can keep learning without starting their research again. Good internal linking helps people discover related information and helps search systems understand how your pages connect.

THINK IN QUESTIONS, NOT JUST PAGES



FOUR RULES FOR USEFUL INTERNAL LINKS

- 01 LINK WHERE IT HELPS** Add links when the reader is likely to need more information; not simply to increase their number.
- 02 DESCRIBE THE DESTINATION** Use meaningful link text. "Read our guide to measuring a roof opening" beats "Click here".
- 03 AVOID UNNECESSARY DUPLICATION** If two pages answer the same question, improve or combine them.
- 04 MAKE IMPORTANT CONTENT ACCESSIBLE** Important pages shouldn't be hidden deep in your site.

Continues on the next page →

Map five connected answers.

Choose an important subject related to your business.

MY MAIN SUBJECT

Identify five questions someone might ask while researching it.

STAGE

CUSTOMER QUESTION

UNDERSTAND

COMPARE

EVALUATE

DECIDE

TAKE ACTION

WHICH ANSWERS ALREADY EXIST ON MY WEBSITE?

WHICH ANSWERS NEED IMPROVING OR CREATING?

WHICH TWO PAGES SHOULD LINK TO ONE ANOTHER?

THE TAKEAWAY

Don't build a maze of content.

Build a clear path from the first question to the next informed decision.

Next: How to test what AI actually says about your business.

Stop guessing. Start observing.

You've identified valuable customer questions, improved your answers and considered how your pages connect. There's another question worth investigating: what happens when someone asks an AI system about the subjects your business covers? Does it provide a useful answer? Does it mention your business? Does it cite your website? Does it describe your expertise accurately?

These are things you can investigate; but one AI response is not a permanent ranking, and a mention doesn't automatically mean your content influenced the answer. Different AI products use different sources and retrieval methods. Responses can vary with the question, location, available search tools and conversation context. Useful AEO testing requires a repeatable approach.

THE THREE TESTS

TEST 01 THE QUESTION TEST

Example: "What should I consider when choosing double or triple glazing for a kitchen extension?"

Look for: Does the answer address the question? Which factors are discussed? Does it surface sources? Does your website appear? Any gaps or inaccuracies?

TEST 02 THE SOURCE TEST

Example: "What should I check before ordering a made-to-measure flat roof window?"

Look for: Does it cover the information on your page? Which sources are shown? Is your website cited or linked? Which other sites appear? Note: similar wording does not prove an AI used your website.

TEST 03 THE BUSINESS TEST

Example: "What does [your business name] specialise in?"

Look for: Is the business identified correctly? Are its services, location and details accurate? Does the answer invent capabilities or claims? This tests representation, not unprompted discovery.

Continues on the next page →

Record your first AI test.

MAKE YOUR TESTS REPEATABLE

- Use the same questions and keep the wording consistent over time.
- Record the system, date and whether web search was enabled.
- Save what actually appeared: response, visible citations, links, errors.
- Repeat rather than generalise; one result tells you only what happened in that test.

YOUR TURN · RECORD YOUR FIRST AI TEST

AI SYSTEM

DATE

WEB SEARCH ENABLED?

☐ Yes☐ No☐ Not sure

QUESTION ASKED

Did the response answer the question well?

☐ Yes☐ Partly☐ No

Was my website cited or linked?

☐ Yes☐ Partly☐ No

Was my business mentioned?

☐ Yes☐ Partly☐ No

OTHER SOURCES OR BUSINESSES THAT APPEARED

WHAT WAS MISSING OR INACCURATE

ONE ACTION THIS TEST SUGGESTS

THE TAKEAWAY

**AEO measurement begins with observation,
not a made-up score.**

Next: How to compare your answers with the sources AI actually surfaces.

Your competitors' content can teach you. So can their sources.

You've run your first AI tests. Perhaps your website appeared, perhaps a competitor was mentioned instead, or perhaps the answer cited an independent guide or professional organisation. The natural reaction is to ask: "Why did AI choose that source instead of mine?" It's a reasonable question, but be careful with the conclusion.

An AI-generated answer doesn't reveal every step behind its selection. A citation doesn't necessarily explain why a source was selected, and different systems may behave differently. What you can do is examine the sources that appeared and compare their content with your own.

LOOK BEYOND THE BUSINESS NAME

THE SOFTWARE PROVIDER Product features, pricing, capabilities.	THE COMPARISON WEBSITE Differences between available options.	THE PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATION Specialist explanations and context.	THE GOVERNMENT SOURCE Official rules or requirements.
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Illustrative examples of source types, not evidence that AI prioritises them in this order.

THE FIVE-POINT SOURCE COMPARISON

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 01 RELEVANCE | Does the page directly address the question being asked? |
| 02 CLARITY | Is the main answer easy to find and understand? |
| 03 DEPTH | Does it explain important details, alternatives and limitations? |
| 04 EVIDENCE | Does it support important statements with reliable information or sources? |
| 05 USEFULNESS | Does it help the reader understand the subject or make a decision? |

Continues on the next page →

Compare two sources.

A PRACTICAL COMPARISON

Question: "What should I look for when choosing an accountant for an ecommerce business?"

WEBSITE A

"We offer professional accounting services tailored to businesses of all sizes."

WEBSITE B

"When choosing an accountant for an ecommerce business, check whether they understand your sales platforms, payment processors, stock accounting, VAT obligations and international trading. Ask which systems they support and how they handle reconciliation between sales channels and accounting software."

YOUR TURN · COMPARE TWO SOURCES

Choose one question from your AI tests and a relevant source that appeared.

THE QUESTION

MY WEBSITE PAGE

SOURCE TO COMPARE

WHAT DOES THE OTHER SOURCE EXPLAIN WELL?

WHAT CAN I GENUINELY IMPROVE?

Don't confuse correlation with cause. If a competitor appears in an AI answer and has excellent content, that's worth examining; but it doesn't prove the content caused the appearance.

THE TAKEAWAY

Don't chase the answer.

Improve the information.

Next: Turn everything you've learned into a practical improvement plan.

You don't need to fix everything. You need to fix the right things.

By now you've examined your customers' questions, reviewed existing content, assessed its credibility and tested how AI systems respond. You may have discovered several things worth improving. The temptation is to tackle everything at once, but a long list of improvements isn't the same as a useful plan.

Decide which changes will make the greatest practical difference for your customers, relative to the work involved.

FOUR TYPES OF IMPROVEMENT

01 CLARIFY

Make existing information easier to understand: rewrite vague descriptions, add direct answers up front, replace unclear headings.

02 STRENGTHEN

Add missing detail and supporting evidence: explain product differences, include verified specifications, support factual claims.

03 CONNECT

Help people discover related information: add relevant internal links, improve navigation, consolidate overlapping articles.

04 CORRECT

Fix information that is inaccurate, outdated or contradictory: update old prices, correct inconsistencies, remove unsupported claims.

THE IMPACT VS EFFORT METHOD

IMPACT ↑

HIGH IMPACT · LOW EFFORT DO FIRST Clear improvements that can be completed relatively quickly.	HIGH IMPACT · HIGH EFFORT PLAN PROPERLY Valuable work that needs more preparation.
LOW IMPACT · LOW EFFORT DO WHEN CONVENIENT Small improvements that may still be worthwhile.	LOW IMPACT · HIGH EFFORT RECONSIDER Work that may not justify the resources required.

EFFORT →

Continues on the next page →

Build your priority list.

Review the work you've completed throughout this Playbook and identify five possible improvements.

IMPROVEMENT	IMPACT H / M / L	EFFORT H / M / L
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____

Choose the three that deserve attention first.

PRIORITY 01

WHAT WILL I CHANGE?

WHICH PAGE OR RESOURCE?

WHAT WILL MAKE IT BETTER?

PRIORITY 02

WHAT WILL I CHANGE?

WHICH PAGE OR RESOURCE?

WHAT WILL MAKE IT BETTER?

PRIORITY 03

WHAT WILL I CHANGE?

WHICH PAGE OR RESOURCE?

WHAT WILL MAKE IT BETTER?

THE TAKEAWAY

**A practical improvement plan beats a long checklist
of fashionable optimisation techniques.**

Thirty days. Four stages. A more useful website.

You don't need to rebuild your entire website, publish an article every day, or chase every new claim about how AI search works. You need a manageable plan that improves the information your customers rely on. The next 30 days are about making those improvements systematically.

WEEK 01 DAYS 1–7	WEEK 02 DAYS 8–14	WEEK 03 DAYS 15–21	WEEK 04 DAYS 22–30
Review and prioritise Confirm your five customer questions, review three existing pages, choose three improvements, check important claims and save your AI test observations. DELIVERABLE A short, prioritised list of ☐ done DONE to improve.	Rewrite and strengthen Rewrite vague openings into direct, useful answers. Improve headings and structure. Explain important differences. Add evidence. Remove unsupported claims. DELIVERABLE At least one substantially ☐ done DONE page that answers a real customer question.	Connect and check Add internal links between related answers. Make important pages accessible via sensible navigation. Check business details for accuracy. Review structured data. DELIVERABLE A connected, usable set of pages with fewer barriers to ☐ done DONE important answers.	Review and learn Repeat the same AI prompts under comparable conditions. Record mentions, citations and inaccuracies. Review relevant analytics. Document what changed and what remains uncertain. DELIVERABLE ☐ done DONE review showing what you changed, what you observed and what you'll do next.

Continues on the next page →

Your personal 30-day plan.

PRIORITY

PAGE OR TASK

TARGET DATE

01

02

03

THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE

THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE I EXPECT

HOW I'LL ADDRESS IT

MY DAY 30 REVIEW DATE

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE AFTER 30 DAYS

- A clearer answer on an important page.
- Better-supported factual claims.
- More useful comparisons or explanations.
- Improved links between related content.
- A documented set of AI testing observations.

Achievable outputs, not guaranteed outcomes. Thirty days is enough to make meaningful improvements; not a promise that AI systems will begin citing your website within that period.

THE TAKEAWAY

**Improvement comes from doing the work,
not collecting optimisation tips.**

Next: How to measure progress and distinguish useful evidence from misleading numbers.

If you can't distinguish observation from evidence, you can't measure progress.

You've made improvements to your website. But how do you know whether the work helped? Some tools offer an "AI visibility score". Others count mentions, citations or the frequency with which a business appears in selected prompts. These observations can be useful, but they are not all measuring the same thing; and none automatically proves that customers are discovering or choosing your business.

The most useful measurement approach separates what you changed, what you observed and what happened afterwards.

THREE LEVELS OF MEASUREMENT

LEVEL 03 · WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR BUSINESS <i>Customer and commercial outcomes</i>	More relevant enquiries, better-informed customers, increased visits, more consultation requests, customers reporting they discovered you through an AI assistant.
LEVEL 02 · WHAT YOU OBSERVED <i>AI answers and search discovery</i>	Your business mentioned, your website cited, inaccurate descriptions, impressions and clicks in search reporting, different sources appearing when you repeat a question.
LEVEL 01 · WHAT YOU IMPROVED <i>Content and website changes</i>	Important questions now have clearer answers; a product comparison is published; unsupported claims corrected; internal links added; outdated details updated.

BASELINE VS REVIEW

Question: "What should I consider before choosing an accountant for an ecommerce business?"

BASELINE

Business not mentioned; two other websites linked.

REVIEW

Business mentioned; website not cited.

What you can conclude: the observed response changed. What you can't conclude: the improvements caused the mention, or that the business now has a permanent position in AI-generated answers.

Continues on the next page →

The AEO review record.

REVIEW PERIOD FROM _____ TO _____

WHAT DID WE CHANGE?

WHICH PAGES WERE IMPROVED?

WHAT DID OUR REPEATED AI TESTS SHOW?

OBSERVATION	BASELINE	REVIEW
Business mentioned?	_____	_____
Website visibly cited?	_____	_____
Business details accurate?	_____	_____
Answer addressed the question?	_____	_____

WHAT DID OUR WEBSITE DATA SHOW?

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN?

WHAT WILL WE INVESTIGATE NEXT?

FIVE MEASUREMENT MISTAKES TO AVOID

- 01 Treating a mention as a recommendation.
- 02 Treating a citation as proof of influence.
- 03 Combining different AI systems into one ranking.
- 04 Assuming correlation proves causation.
- 05 Ignoring actual customer outcomes.

THE TAKEAWAY

Measure the work. Observe the systems.

Evaluate the business impact. Keep them separate.

Next: The mistakes and shortcuts that can undermine otherwise good content.

Not everything labelled "AEO advice" is worth following.

As AI-powered search and answer systems evolve, so does the advice surrounding them. Some recommendations are sensible extensions of good content and technical website practices. Others promise shortcuts, guaranteed visibility or special techniques that supposedly make AI systems recommend a business.

Before investing time or money in an AEO tactic, ask: what credible evidence supports the claim?

MYTH 01 *AI only gives one answer, so you must be the winner.*

AI-generated answers can contain several businesses, viewpoints, sources or recommendations. The format depends on the system, question and context.

INSTEAD

Focus on making your information useful, accurate and relevant.

MYTH 02 *Adding an llms.txt file will make AI recommend you.*

The proposed format is intended to help describe a site's content, but it is not an established universal requirement, nor is there reliable evidence it improves recommendations.

INSTEAD

Prioritise accessible, well-structured pages, accurate information and sensible technical foundations.

MYTH 03 *Schema markup tells AI your business is trustworthy.*

Structured data describes information; it does not independently verify that the information is true.

INSTEAD

Use accurate, relevant structured data. Support important claims with evidence.

Continues on the next page →

Three more myths, and a reality check.

MYTH 04 *You need to publish new content constantly.*

Publishing more pages doesn't automatically make a website more useful. Ten thin articles repeating the same advice may provide less value than one carefully maintained guide.

INSTEAD

Improve existing pages first. Create new content when there's a meaningful customer question that deserves its own answer.

MYTH 05 *If AI mentions your business, your AEO is working.*

A single response can change when repeated. An AI system might mention your company accurately, describe it incorrectly or include it among several alternatives.

INSTEAD

Record the exact question, system, date, visible sources and response. Repeat tests consistently and consider customer outcomes alongside AI observations.

MYTH 06 *There's a secret formula that guarantees AI citations.*

No publicly established, universal formula guarantees a website will be cited or recommended by all AI answer systems. Behaviour varies and changes over time.

INSTEAD

Build content that deserves to be useful. Treat claims of guaranteed citations with scepticism.

THE THREE-QUESTION REALITY CHECK

- | | |
|---|---|
| 01 IS THE CLAIM SUPPORTED? | Does it come with credible documentation, evidence or reproducible testing? |
| 02 DOES IT SOLVE A REAL PROBLEM? | Will it improve clarity, accessibility, accuracy or usefulness? |
| 03 CAN I EVALUATE THE RESULT? | Can I verify the change was implemented and observe anything meaningful afterwards? |

QUESTION ONE PIECE OF ADVICE

AN AEO CLAIM I'VE HEARD

WHAT EVIDENCE SUPPORTS IT? WHAT PROBLEM WOULD IT SOLVE?

THE TAKEAWAY

Be curious about new techniques.

Be sceptical of guarantees.

Next: Your reusable checklist for every important webpage.

Before you publish, check the answer.

Use this checklist whenever you create or update an important webpage. It brings together the principles from this Playbook into one practical review.

01 PURPOSE · does this page have a clear reason to exist?

- ☐ I know which customer question or need the page addresses.
- ☐ The page title clearly describes its subject.
- ☐ The information is relevant to the intended reader.
- ☐ The page adds something useful rather than unnecessarily duplicating existing content.

02 THE ANSWER · can someone find the information they came for?

- ☐ The main answer appears early on the page.
- ☐ The opening explanation is direct and understandable.
- ☐ Important terms are explained where necessary.
- ☐ The content avoids vague marketing language in place of useful information.

03 DEPTH AND USEFULNESS · does the content go far enough?

- ☐ Relevant details, differences or options are explained.
- ☐ Important conditions and limitations are included.
- ☐ Comparisons explain meaningful trade-offs.
- ☐ The reader has enough information to understand what to consider next.

Continues on the next page →

The remaining categories, three final tests, and your page review.

04 ACCURACY AND CREDIBILITY · can important claims be supported?

- ☐ Factual statements are accurate to the best of our knowledge.
- ☐ Claims requiring evidence have appropriate support.
- ☐ Relevant experience or qualifications are described accurately.
- ☐ Sources are suitable for the claims they support.
- ☐ Dates, prices, specifications and guidance have been checked where relevant.

05 STRUCTURE AND ACCESSIBILITY · is the page easy to navigate?

- ☐ Headings describe the sections beneath them.
- ☐ Paragraphs are readable and logically organised.
- ☐ Lists or tables are used when they genuinely improve clarity.
- ☐ The page works on mobile devices.
- ☐ Structured data, if used, accurately reflects the page.

06 CONNECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS · does the page help the reader continue?

- ☐ Relevant supporting pages are linked where useful.
- ☐ Internal links use descriptive wording.
- ☐ The next step follows naturally from the information provided.
- ☐ The page doesn't push an unrelated sales message ahead of the answer.

THE THREE FINAL TESTS

THE 10-SECOND TEST

Can someone identify what this page is about and where the main answer begins?

☐ Yes

☐ Work

THE EVIDENCE TEST

Would I be comfortable explaining where the important factual claims came from?

☐ Yes

☐ Work

THE CUSTOMER TEST

Would this page genuinely help someone understand, compare or decide?

☐ Yes

☐ Work

THE TAKEAWAY

**Write for the person asking. Structure for clarity.
Support what you claim.**

Next: Bring the work together and record your three commitments.

You've done the thinking. Now make it count.

Answer Engine Optimisation isn't about persuading AI to say nice things about your business. It's about making the information you publish clearer, more useful, more credible and easier to interpret. That's work worth doing regardless of how AI-powered search evolves.

YOUR FIVE MOST IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS

01 START WITH REAL QUESTIONS

Your customers' questions should guide your content priorities. Don't create pages simply because a keyword tool suggests an opportunity.

02 ANSWER BEFORE YOU PROMOTE

Give readers the information they came for. Demonstrate expertise through useful explanations rather than unsupported claims.

03 MAKE YOUR INFORMATION CREDIBLE

Support important statements with appropriate evidence. Explain limitations and keep information accurate.

04 CONNECT WHAT BELONGS TOGETHER

Help people move between related questions, comparisons and practical guidance.

05 IMPROVE, TEST AND REPEAT

Review what you've published, document what changes and distinguish AI observations from actual business outcomes.

Continues on the next page →

My three commitments.

Choose three realistic actions you will take after completing this Playbook.

COMMITMENT 01 THE FIRST PAGE I'LL IMPROVE PAGE OR SUBJECT

WHAT I'LL CHANGE · WHAT I'LL RECORD

TARGET DATE

COMMITMENT 02 THE QUESTION I'LL ANSWER BETTER PAGE OR SUBJECT

WHAT I'LL CHANGE · WHAT I'LL RECORD

TARGET DATE

COMMITMENT 03 HOW I'LL REVIEW MY PROGRESS PAGE OR SUBJECT

WHAT I'LL CHANGE · WHAT I'LL RECORD

TARGET DATE

MY PERSONAL ANSWER-READY CHECK

- ☐ I know which customer questions matter most.
- ☐ I've identified content that needs improving.
- ☐ I understand how to write a direct, useful answer.
- ☐ I know how to support important claims.
- ☐ I've planned improvements to at least one webpage.
- ☐ I understand what AI testing can and cannot tell me.

THE TAKEAWAY

**Better answers are an investment in better information.
Start with one important question. Improve one useful page.**

Next: Keep asking better questions. Your next steps and further learning.

Keep asking better questions.

The way people find information is changing. The need for good answers isn't.

There isn't one universal AEO formula. No business can guarantee that its website will be selected, cited or recommended in every AI-generated answer. But there is something businesses can control: the quality of the information they make available.

Answer real questions. Explain complicated decisions. Provide accurate details. Demonstrate genuine experience. Support important claims. Make it easier for people to understand what you offer. These are useful foundations for today's websites and sensible principles for an evolving search landscape.

CONTINUE LEARNING

WhatsAEO *Are you providing clear, credible answers?*

WHATSAEO.CO.UK

Practical guidance for making your website clearer and more useful.

WhatsGEO *Can AI-powered discovery find and understand you?*

WHATSGEO.IO

The companion resource on AI visibility and discovery.

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Created by Creative Sauce. We develop practical resources exploring artificial intelligence, digital technology and their implications for businesses. The aim of this Playbook is to help business owners make informed decisions, ask better questions and avoid unsupported promises about AI visibility.

AI-powered search and answer systems evolve. Features, documentation and behaviour may change after publication. The exercises in this guide are practical content-improvement and observation methods; they do not represent an official ranking methodology or guarantee search visibility, AI citations, recommendations or commercial results.

Good answers matter.

Make yours worth finding.