

The SEO Basics Guide

Being found online used to mean one thing: ranking on Google. It now means three, because people are increasingly asking an AI instead of scrolling a results page. The good news for a solo agent is that the work behind all three overlaps almost completely — and it's work you can do yourself, for free.

WHY THIS CHANGED

A search results page shows ten options. An AI answer names three and stops.

That's the whole shift in one sentence. When someone scrolled a page of links, being seventh still got you seen. When an AI answers “who's a good agent in my area,” it names a few and moves on — and if you're not among them, the person never learns you exist. Fewer slots, higher stakes. Which is exactly why specific, local, consistent presence matters more now than it did when volume alone could carry you.

PART 01 The three letters, plainly

You'll hear these used loosely. Here's what each actually means for you.

SEO RANKING

Search Engine Optimization

Getting your pages to rank in traditional results on Google and Bing. The goal is a click — someone sees your listing among the results and chooses you. *This is still the foundation. Nothing has replaced it.*

AEO BEING THE ANSWER

Answer Engine Optimization

Being selected as the direct answer — the snippet at the top, the voice assistant's reply, the box that resolves the question without a click. The goal isn't a visit; it's being the response itself. *Content shaped as clear questions and clear answers wins here.*

GEO BEING CITED

Generative Engine Optimization

Being named and recommended inside an AI-generated answer, from tools like ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Perplexity, and Google's AI summaries. The goal is to be understood clearly enough that the system is confident recommending you by name. *Consistency and reputation matter more here than keywords.*

AN HONEST WORD ABOUT THE LABELS

These terms aren't settled. Different people use AEO and GEO interchangeably, and you'll also see LLMO and AIO describing the same work. Don't spend energy on the vocabulary — and be cautious with anyone selling you a service built mostly on the acronym. The underlying tasks are what matter, and they're the same tasks under any name.

PART 02 The foundation that serves all three

Do these five and you've done most of the work for every kind of search at once.

1 Complete and verify your Google Business Profile

It's the single most valuable free thing you control. It feeds traditional ranking, the map results, and it's one of the main places AI systems look when someone asks about a local business. Every empty field is a missed signal.

2 Make your name, phone, and city identical everywhere

Your profile, your website, your social bios, your brokerage page, any directory you're listed on. Machines confirm you exist by cross-checking. Every mismatch adds doubt, and doubt is what keeps a system from recommending you by name.

3 Build reviews steadily rather than in bursts

Reviews function as a filter, not just a score. A steady flow of recent, specific reviews does more for you than a large pile of old ones — and reviews that mention what you actually do and where make you easier to recommend for those searches.

4 Own a page that's genuinely yours

Not only your brokerage's profile of you. Your own site is the primary source these systems read when deciding what you do and who you serve. If it doesn't say plainly what you specialize in and where you work, nothing else can.

5 Answer real questions in plain language

The questions your clients actually ask, answered directly and specifically about your market. This one piece of work feeds all three letters at once — it ranks, it gets selected as an answer, and it gives AI something clear to cite.

PART 03 What's different about the two newer ones

Once the foundation is in place, these are the additions worth making.

AEO

Be the answer

- Write headings as the actual question someone types or says.
- Answer in the first two sentences. Explain after — don't build up to it.
- Keep answers self-contained, so a paragraph makes sense lifted out on its own.
- Use your Google profile's Q&A section — it's built for exactly this.
- Write the way people speak, since many of these questions are asked out loud.

GEO

Be worth citing

- Be specific about place and specialty. Vague generalists are hard to recommend.
- Get mentioned where you don't control the page — local news, community sites, neighborhood groups, partner websites.
- Say the same thing about yourself everywhere, so there's one clear story.
- Publish your own local observations. Original beats recycled.
- Stay current. Recent, dated content is favored over material that's gone stale.

PART 04 Check it yourself — twenty minutes a month

You can't fix what you haven't looked at, and this costs nothing but attention.

The monthly check

STEP 1

Search your own name in Google, in a private window. Is the result accurate, current, and clearly yours?

STEP 2

Search the way a stranger would: “real estate agent in [your city],” or your niche plus your city. Do you appear anywhere?

STEP 3

Ask two different AI tools the same question a client would ask — “who's a good agent for [your niche] in [your city]?” Note who gets named. Different tools cite different sources, so check more than one.

STEP 4

Ask an AI tool directly what it knows about you by name. If the answer is thin, wrong, or blank, that's your gap — usually missing information, not bad luck.

STEP 5

Write down one thing to fix. Fix it this month. Check again next month.

Keep a simple record — the question you asked, which tool, whether you appeared, who did. Three months of that tells you more about your visibility than any report you could buy.

What to leave alone

- **Don't buy your way in.** There's no ad slot inside an AI recommendation. Anyone promising to place you there is selling something else.
- **Don't stuff keywords anywhere.** Not your business name, not your page titles. It reads as manipulation to both machines and people, and it can get your profile flagged.
- **Don't chase every new acronym.** The labels will keep changing. Complete profile, consistent details, real reviews, clear local content — that has worked through every version of search so far.
- **Don't publish thin content at volume.** Twenty vague posts do less than three genuinely useful local ones. These systems are built to find the useful thing.
- **Don't expect it next week.** Being found compounds. The work you do this quarter shows up over the following ones, which is exactly why most agents quit before it pays.

Visibility compounds. Consistency is the whole game.

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