

AEO and AI search: 16 questions to ask before you pay

Not every question applies to every project: the right questions depend on what you are aiming for as an end result. Pick the ones that directly relate to the final product or the goal you want to achieve. Asking all of them without relevant judgement is more likely to confuse the person on the other side.

A1

Can an AI read my site at all right now?

WHY YOU ASK

This is the first question, not the last. Some sites look normal in a browser but return an empty page to anything that is not a browser. Such a site cannot be cited by anyone, no matter how much is spent on content.

A GOOD ANSWER

Says they will check this before anything else, and explains what they check: whether content arrives ready or is assembled by a script, and whether the server blocks access.

A BAD ANSWER

Starts straight in with "we will add llms.txt and schema". That is painting a house without checking whether it has a door.

HOW TO CHECK

Open an assistant, give it the URL of one specific page and ask what it says. If the answer is generic or invented, the machine cannot see the page.

A2

What is the difference between what you do for Google and what you do for assistants?

WHY YOU ASK

This checks whether you are buying a second service or a second name for the same service. Either can be fine, as long as you know which one you are paying for.

A GOOD ANSWER

Honestly admits 70 to 80 per cent overlaps, and names the rest specifically: machine readability, clear answers at the top of the text, connected company data.

A BAD ANSWER

Presents AEO as an entirely new science with new terminology and a new fee, without one concrete different deliverable.

HOW TO CHECK

Ask for a list of tasks that are in AEO but not in SEO. If the list is empty or made of generalities, you are paying twice for one thing.

A3

How will we check whether we are being cited?

WHY YOU ASK

There is no reliable tool that ranks you inside assistant answers. The answer to this question shows whether the person is working with reality or selling confidence.

A GOOD ANSWER

Proposes a list of 20 to 40 real questions your customers would ask, and a regular manual check. Admits answers differ between people and days.

A BAD ANSWER

Shows a tool with an exact "AI search position" and a graph. The number looks convincing and rests on nothing anyone has access to.

HOW TO CHECK

Ask five questions from the list yourself, on two different assistants. You will see exactly what the provider sees. That is all the visibility that currently exists.

A4

What structured data will you add, and why that specifically?

WHY YOU ASK

Structured data is how you tell a machine what a page is. Applied at random it does no harm and no good. Applied wrongly, it turns one company into two different ones.

A GOOD ANSWER

Matches the type of structured data to the type of page, and mentions that the company should be described once and referenced everywhere else.

A BAD ANSWER

The same block copied onto every page, including pages it does not describe. This is the most common way to damage yourself with good intentions.

HOW TO CHECK

Search for Google's free structured data test, run two different pages of yours and see whether you get different descriptions or the same one twice.

A5

Does llms.txt actually solve anything?

WHY YOU ASK

This is a trap question and serves exactly that purpose. The file is new, harmless, and so far without proven effect. The answer shows whether the person distinguishes proven from fashionable.

A GOOD ANSWER

"We add it because it is harmless and takes five minutes, but it is not a strategy and there is no proof anyone reads it." That exact tone is the sign of judgement.

A BAD ANSWER

The file is presented as the main reason to pay for AEO. If it leads the offer, the rest is probably just as thin.

HOW TO CHECK

Ask what measurably changed for another client after adding it. The honest answer is "nothing we can separate from everything else".

A6

Which assistants do my customers actually use, and in what language do they ask?

WHY YOU ASK

Work aimed at an assistant your customers do not use, or in a language they do not ask in, is effort without an audience.

A GOOD ANSWER

Talks specifically about your market: which assistants are used here, what that means for Bulgarian-language content, and where the limits are.

A BAD ANSWER

Lists every fashionable name at once and promises presence everywhere. Everywhere is not a strategy.

HOW TO CHECK

Ask five of your customers whether they use an assistant and what they ask it. Five answers are worth a market study.

A7

Which pages will you rewrite, and why exactly those?

WHY YOU ASK

AEO is not seasoning sprinkled over the whole site; it is work on the pages that answer specific commercially valuable questions.

A GOOD ANSWER

Gives a named list, ties each page to the questions it must answer, and starts with the most valuable ones.

A BAD ANSWER

"We will optimise the whole site." The whole site means no page in particular.

HOW TO CHECK

Ask for the list of addresses before the start. Then compare what is done against it, page by page.

A8

How will you make sure the company's data is identical everywhere?

WHY YOU ASK

Assistants assemble your image from many places, and a mismatch in name, address or description makes them hesitate or err.

A GOOD ANSWER

Plans a review of everywhere the company appears: site, maps, directories, profiles, and alignment of the data.

A BAD ANSWER

Works only on the site, as if the rest of the internet did not exist.

HOW TO CHECK

Search your company by name and look at the first ten results. The mismatches you can see, the machine sees too.

A9

What do we do about the reviews and mentions assistants read?

WHY YOU ASK

The assistant often cites what others say about you, and bad or missing reviews enter the answer alongside your site.

A GOOD ANSWER

Includes a review of your ratings and presence in sources assistants rely on, with a realistic view of what can be influenced.

A BAD ANSWER

Promises to "clean up" the negative from the internet. That is not a service, it is a claim.

HOW TO CHECK

Ask an assistant what customers say about your company. The answer shows which sources carry weight.

A10

How will we track visitors arriving from AI assistants?

WHY YOU ASK

Part of these visits is already visible in analytics, and without separating them nobody can say whether the work produces anything.

A GOOD ANSWER

Sets up source tracking in Analytics, shows where these visits will appear, and admits the picture is partial.

A BAD ANSWER

"That cannot be measured." It cannot be measured fully. It can be measured enough to see a direction.

HOW TO CHECK

Open Analytics and look for assistant names among the sources. If the provider cannot show you where, stop at this question.

A11

Can AEO work if the underlying SEO is broken?

WHY YOU ASK

Assistants stand on the same foundation: an inaccessible, slow or chaotic site is not citable, however "AI-optimised" it is.

A GOOD ANSWER

Says it plainly: foundation first, superstructure second, and if the foundation is bad we start there, even though it is the duller work.

A BAD ANSWER

Sells an AEO package for a site they have not looked at. That is painting a condemned house.

HOW TO CHECK

Ask: if the review shows serious SEO problems, what happens to the AEO plan. The answer shows whether they sell a method or a package.

A12

How often does the work need to be reviewed and refreshed?

WHY YOU ASK

Assistant answers shift with the models and the competition, and one-off work ages quietly.

A GOOD ANSWER

Proposes a review cycle, for example quarterly: check the question list, refresh what has aged, report what changed.

A BAD ANSWER

Sells it as "done once, done forever". Nothing in this field is forever, including the assistants themselves.

HOW TO CHECK

Write down the assistants' answers to ten of your questions today. Ask again in three months and compare.

A13

Who is responsible for the accuracy of the answers we publish?

WHY YOU ASK

Pages written "for machines to cite" sometimes sacrifice precision, and the error is then repeated by the assistant under your name.

A GOOD ANSWER

Assigns a person on your side to review facts, prices and terms before publication, and a process for corrections when things change.

A BAD ANSWER

Nobody reviews: what is written gets published, and you see it when a customer quotes it back at you.

HOW TO CHECK

Check three changeable facts on your site: a price, a term, a condition. If one of the three is stale, there is no process.

A14

What can be done if an assistant gives wrong information about my company?

WHY YOU ASK

This is already happening to businesses, and the provider's answer shows whether they understand the mechanics or sell magic.

A GOOD ANSWER

Explains honestly: you fix the source the machine draws from, publish clear correct information, and the result comes slowly, without guarantees.

A BAD ANSWER

"We will file a correction with the AI companies." No such channel with guaranteed effect exists, and whoever promises it knows that.

HOW TO CHECK

Ask them to describe a case where they corrected a wrong answer, and what happened. Having no cases is also

an answer.

A15

Is this one-off work or a monthly service, and what am I paying for in each?

WHY YOU ASK

Blending the one-off foundation with monthly monitoring is the easiest way to pay permanently for non-permanent work.

A GOOD ANSWER

Separates clearly: one-off for the analysis, rewriting and structure; monthly only if there is real ongoing work, with a description of it.

A BAD ANSWER

A monthly "AEO fee" with no list of what is done each month. That is a subscription to hope.

HOW TO CHECK

Ask for the offer in two columns: one-off and monthly, with activities against every amount. An empty column speaks.

A16

How will I know whether competitors are being cited instead of me?

WHY YOU ASK

The goal is not presence in general, but presence where the answer currently names someone else.

A GOOD ANSWER

Includes competitors in the monitored question set and reports who appears, with the caveat that answers vary.

A BAD ANSWER

Watches only you, as if the assistant were choosing between you and nothing.

HOW TO CHECK

Ask an assistant the five most commercial questions in your industry and write down which companies it names. That is today's real ranking.

