PRACTICAL AI DISCOVERY RESOURCE

AI Discovery Glossary

What do the terms behind AI discovery actually mean?

Plain-English explanations and examples spanning AI answers, GEO, SXO, visibility, sources and measurement. Use them to make sense of the subject across your team.

29 plain-English terms with examples

> Use this page to decode terms, not to score your brand. Each definition has a quick example. For diagnosis and next steps, open the practical Q&A.

Answers and visibility

Related Q&A: what to check and change.

AI answer

A generated response to a user's question. It may summarize information, list options, give links or recommend an action.

Example: A buyer asks for SME banking options and receives a generated shortlist.

AI search

A search experience that uses AI to produce or organize an answer alongside or instead of a conventional list of links. Google AI Overviews, ChatGPT search and Microsoft Copilot have different interfaces and source conditions.

Example: ChatGPT search answers a question with linked sources instead of only a list of results.

AI visibility

How a brand, page or source appears in observed AI answers. A mention, first mention, citation and recommendation are different measures.

Example: A bank is mentioned in 6 of 10 saved answers in a defined test.

Answer accuracy

Whether an observed AI answer describes a brand or fact correctly when checked against dated, inspectable sources. Accuracy is separate from being mentioned or cited.

Example: A team checks an answer’s stated fee against the current fee page and records the answer date.

AEO, answer engine optimization

A label for improving the chance that useful, accurate information can support answers. It is a practice label, not an official platform score or a guarantee of inclusion.

Example: A service page answers a customer question clearly and cites its own evidence.

SXO, search experience optimization

Improving the full search journey: helping people find a relevant answer, understand the evidence and take a useful next step. It combines discoverability with clarity and usability; it does not guarantee an AI mention.

Example: A service page answers a buyer question, shows current proof and makes the next action clear.

GEO, generative engine optimization

A practice label for improving how useful, verifiable content may contribute to AI-generated answers. It is not an official platform score or guarantee.

Example: A team makes a claim page easier to verify across its site and independent sources.

SEO, search engine optimization

Improving a site's discoverability and usefulness in search. Technical access, helpful content and clear site structure still matter for Google's AI features, according to Google Search Central.

Example: A crawlable service page earns visits from conventional search results.

Mention and first mention

A mention is a brand name in the answer. First mention records which brand appears earliest. It describes answer order; it is not proof of preference, endorsement or purchase intent.

Example: An answer names Brand A before Brand B.

Recommendation

An answer that presents a brand as a suitable option for a stated need. It is stronger than a bare mention, but still needs evidence.

Example: An answer suggests Brand A for a stated business need.

SEO, AEO and GEO overlap. SEO covers discoverable, useful pages; AEO and GEO are practice labels for making information clearer and easier to verify as a possible input to AI answers. None guarantees a mention or citation.

Sources and proof

Related Q&A: what to check and change.

Citation

A visible source link or reference displayed with an answer. It shows a source was presented, not that every nearby claim is supported.

Example: An answer links to a bank fee page.

Grounding

Using retrieved or supplied material to support an AI response. Grounding can help trace evidence, but the generated wording still needs checking against the source.

Example: A generated answer uses a retrieved policy page for context.

Retrieval

The step where a system finds material to use in an answer. A page can be indexed yet not retrieved for a given question. The precise retrieval process varies by product and is not fully visible to site owners.

Example: A system finds an annual report before composing an answer.

Owned evidence

Facts and explanations on channels a brand controls, such as its website or published reports. Their quality affects how easily a reader can check a claim.

Example: A product page states who is eligible and what it costs.

Earned evidence

Independent reporting, expert commentary or other third-party material that can corroborate a claim. Its value depends on relevance and credibility; it cannot be ordered into an AI answer.

Example: An independent article verifies a launch date.

Proof gap

The distance between what an answer or brand claims and the evidence a reader can inspect. An example is a “regional leader” claim with no dated, market-specific support.

Example: An answer says “regional leader” but provides no dated support.

Claim-to-source fit

Whether a linked source actually supports the statement beside it. A link alone is not enough.

Example: A fee page supports a fee claim, not a security claim.

Crawling and access

Related Q&A: what to check and change.

Crawler

Software that requests pages for discovery or other stated purposes. OpenAI distinguishes OAI-SearchBot for search from GPTBot for training; permissions can be set separately.

Example: OAI-SearchBot requests a public product page.

robots.txt

A site file that tells compliant crawlers which paths they may request. A robots rule can affect discovery. It is not a promise that an allowed page will be cited.

Example: A Disallow rule asks compliant bots to skip a private path.

noindex

A directive asking search engines not to index a page. Use it deliberately. If a crawler cannot access a page, it may also be unable to read the directive.

Example: A staging page asks search engines not to include it in results.

Canonical URL

The preferred URL for substantially duplicate pages. It helps consolidate page signals but is a hint, not a command that forces an AI answer to use the page.

Example: Two copies of a guide point to one preferred URL.

Structured data

Machine-readable labels for visible page facts. Use supported types accurately. Google says no special markup is needed for AI features; FAQ markup is not a shortcut to AI recommendations.

Example: Article markup matches the visible article title and date.

Measurement

Related Q&A: what to check and change.

Prompt set

A documented list of realistic customer questions used for repeated checks. Include stage of decision, market, language, engine and test date. Avoid substituting brand-name searches for discovery questions.

> **Example:** A test uses ten buyer questions about fees, trust and business needs.

Share of voice in a tested sample

The proportion of observed answers in a defined prompt set where a brand appears. State the denominator and sampling rules. It is not a share of all AI answers or all customer exposure.

> **Example:** A brand appears in 6 of 10 saved answers: 60% of that sample.

Citation count

The number of times a source appears as a citation in a measured platform or sample. Bing's AI Performance report has citation metrics, with limits on what they show about answer placement.

> **Example:** A source URL appears as a citation three times in a measured set.

Platform impression

An appearance recorded under a platform's reporting rules. It is not a saved AI answer, a citation, a visit or a measure of exposure across all AI systems. Check the platform's definition and reporting limits before comparing it with another measure.

> **Example:** A Search Console impression is reported for a page shown in a Google search result; it does not show whether ChatGPT cited the page.

Referral traffic

Visits arriving from a source such as ChatGPT search. It shows click-through, not every answer exposure or mention. Check tagging and attribution rules before comparing sources.

> **Example:** A visitor clicks from ChatGPT search to a brand website.

Qualified lead

An enquiry that meets agreed sales criteria, such as relevant need, market and ability to act. It is a business outcome to track separately from an AI answer appearance or a website visit.

> **Example:** A visitor from an AI referral requests a briefing and meets the team's agreed qualification criteria.

Market and language variation

Differences in answers when geography, local evidence or language changes. One market result need not describe another.

> **Example:** A category question names different providers in Singapore and Indonesia.

From definition to decision

A term names a signal; it does not tell you what to fix. Use the Q&A to diagnose a specific answer and choose a practical next step.

Read the Q&A and 30-day plan, try the free AI Visibility Readiness Check to assess your team's approach and next action, or ask PRecious about a measured review.

Primary references

- Google Search Central: AI features
- Google: generative AI optimization guide
- OpenAI: crawlers
- Bing Webmaster Tools: AI Performance