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Google publishes guide to optimizing for generative AI search

Author: [Alex Lindley](#)

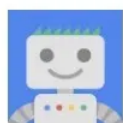
3 min read

May 19, 2026

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Google published the official guide on May 15, 2026, specifically addressing how to optimize for generative AI features in Google Search.

The document, titled "[Optimizing your website for generative AI features on Google Search](#)," was announced by John Mueller through the Google Search Central Blog and is now housed under a new "Generative AI fundamentals" navigation section in Search Central documentation.



Google Search Central

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We've published a new guide on how to optimize your content for generative AI features on Google Search.

It includes guidance to help you focus on what matters most when it comes to SEO and generative AI features, along with myth-busting some common misconceptions and guidance on the importance of providing unique, non-commodity content.

Learn more at <https://lnkd.in/egqtSFDR>

Google Search Central Blog



A new resource for optimizing for generative AI in Google Search | Google Search Central Blog | Google...

developers.google.com

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This is Google's most explicit, on-record statement yet about what they're saying works — and what doesn't — for visibility inside features like AI Overviews and AI Mode.

What the guide covers

Much of the guidance consolidates positions Google has shared at conferences, in blog posts, and in interviews over the past year. It's organized into five main sections:

1. Is SEO still relevant for generative AI search?
2. Apply foundational SEO best practices to generative AI search
3. Mythbusting generative AI search: what you don't need to do
4. Explore agentic experiences
5. Next steps: what to focus on

What's new is that it's now documentation, acting as a reference point for marketers who've been asking for clarity.

Google's core message: AI search visibility is still SEO

The guide's position is clear: SEO still matters for generative AI search. Google states clearly that AI Overviews and AI Mode are not running on completely separate systems.

"The best practices for SEO continue to be relevant because our generative AI features on Google Search are rooted in our core Search ranking and quality systems," according to the new guide.

Google clarifies that its generative AI features use AI techniques like [retrieval-augmented generation](#) and [query fan-out](#) “to highlight content from our Search index.”

In other words, if your content isn't technically sound and high-quality enough to rank in traditional search, it won't perform in AI-generated answers either.

The mythbusting section: What Google says to stop doing

Google now says SEOs can “ignore” the following tactics for Google Search and its generative AI features:

- **llms.txt files:** Google's crawler may discover these files, but they're treated like any other text file. There is no special treatment or preferred indexing pathway. (Keep in mind that other crawlers may make use of such files.)
- **Content chunking:** No need to break content into small pieces for AI systems, Google says. Google says its systems can understand multi-topic pages and extract the relevant passage without the author pre-fragmenting the article.
- **AI-specific rewriting:** AI features can understand synonyms and general meanings, according to Google. Rewriting content to capture every long-tail keyword variation isn't necessary, the guide says.
- **Special schema or Markdown versions of pages:** Not required for Google generative AI search inclusion, the new guide says.

Google also noted that seeking inauthentic “mentions” in order to influence what’s being said about your products and services is not likely to be helpful because its generative AI features rely on the same systems and safeguards as the core ranking systems.

“Our core ranking systems focus on high-quality content while other systems block spam; our generative AI features depend on both,” according to the guide.

The agentic experiences section: A signal for what's next

Google references agent-friendly best practices and emerging standards like [Universal Commerce Protocol \(UCP\)](#) and [WebMCP](#), which enable AI agents to take actions on behalf of users directly from search results.

The section is framed as optional and forward-looking.

“If this is something that's relevant to your business and you have extra time, check out the available agentic experiences and review the guide to [agent-friendly website best practices](#) ...” the guide says.

Further reading: [Agentic search: How AI agents will decide which brands get found](#)

Why this matters for marketers

It's important to note that this guide applies only to the Google ecosystem. ChatGPT, Claude, and other AI engines may play by different rules. And Google may not reveal all the details about what works and what doesn't.

Still, this GEO guide is significant for marketers for two reasons:

First, the infrastructure around AI search is solidifying, and when infrastructure solidifies, accountability follows. Search marketers are increasingly the professionals best positioned to lead this work.

Second, the guide legitimizes the discipline while narrowing what that discipline actually involves. Google frames AEO and GEO as extensions of SEO — not separate channels requiring separate expertise.

How Semrush supports AI search visibility

Google's guide doesn't introduce a new playbook. But it validates one that already works. The question is whether your current execution actually holds up. [Semrush](#) gives you the data to find out.

Use these tools:

Keyword Magic Tool: Discover the relevant keywords and topics that create the basis for visibility inside AI-generated answers.

Keyword Magic Tool: project management

Database: United States Currency: USD

All Questions All Keywords Broad Match Phrase Match Exact Match Related Languages

Enter domain for personalized data

Volume KD % Intent CPC (USD) Include keywords Exclude keywords Advanced filters

By number By volume

All	377,001
> jobs	21,563
> software	19,348
> salary	18,833
> system	15,697
> construction	15,025
> pdf	9,227
> tool	8,998
> best	8,522

All keywords: 377.0K Total Volume: 4,529,560 Average KD: 28% Send keywords

Keyword	Intent	Volume	Trend	KD %	CPC (USD)	Com.	SF
project management	I	450.0K		85	7.12	0.44	6
project management certification	I	40.5K		48	6.94	0.85	7
project management software	I C	33.1K		69	19.07	0.19	7
management in software project	I	27.1K		55	19.07	0.19	6
project management institute	N	27.1K		76	1.36	0.34	8
project management tools	I C	27.1K		61	15.35	0.48	9
project manager	I C	22.2K		76	7.12	0.44	7
project manager jobs	C	22.2K		30	0.50	0.27	4

AI Visibility Toolkit: See which of your URLs are being cited in AI answers, what prompts are triggering those citations, and how citation frequency trends over time across platforms.

AI Visibility



Main Metrics Monthly Audience AI Visibility



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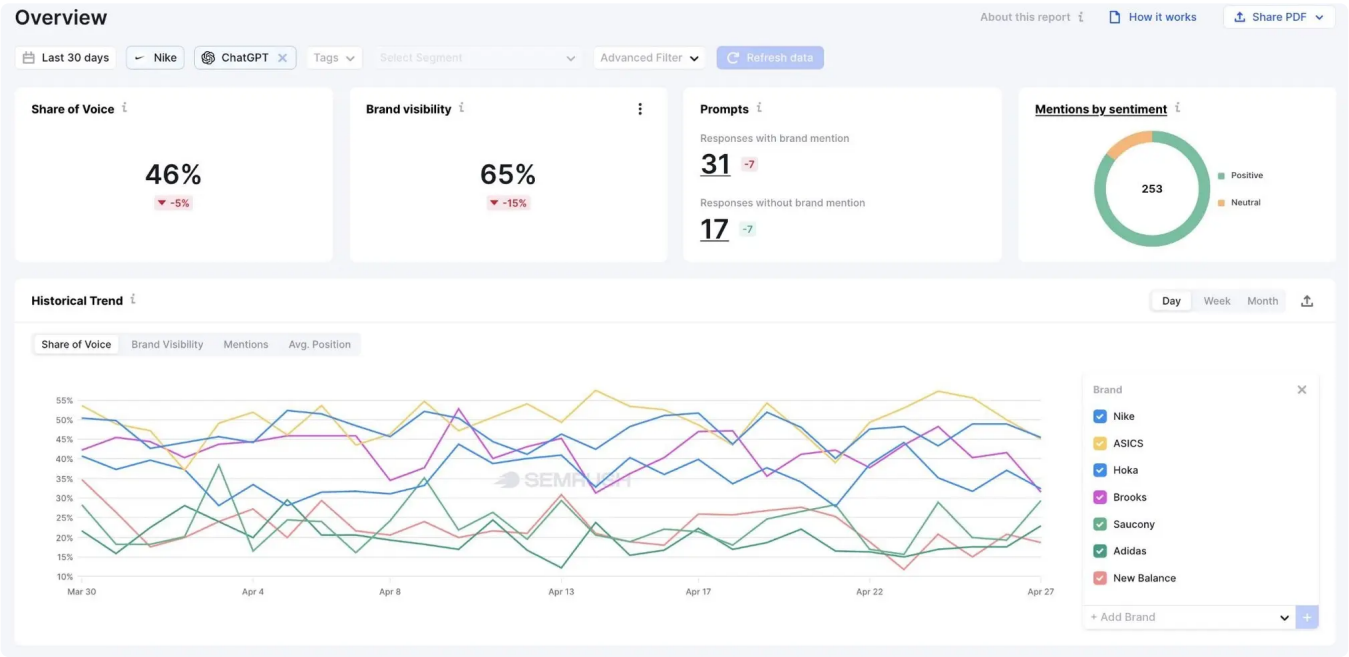
Mentions Cited Pages

ChatGPT		14.4%	4.2K
AI Overview		42.8%	12.5K
AI Mode		21.4%	6.3K
Gemini		21.3%	6.2K

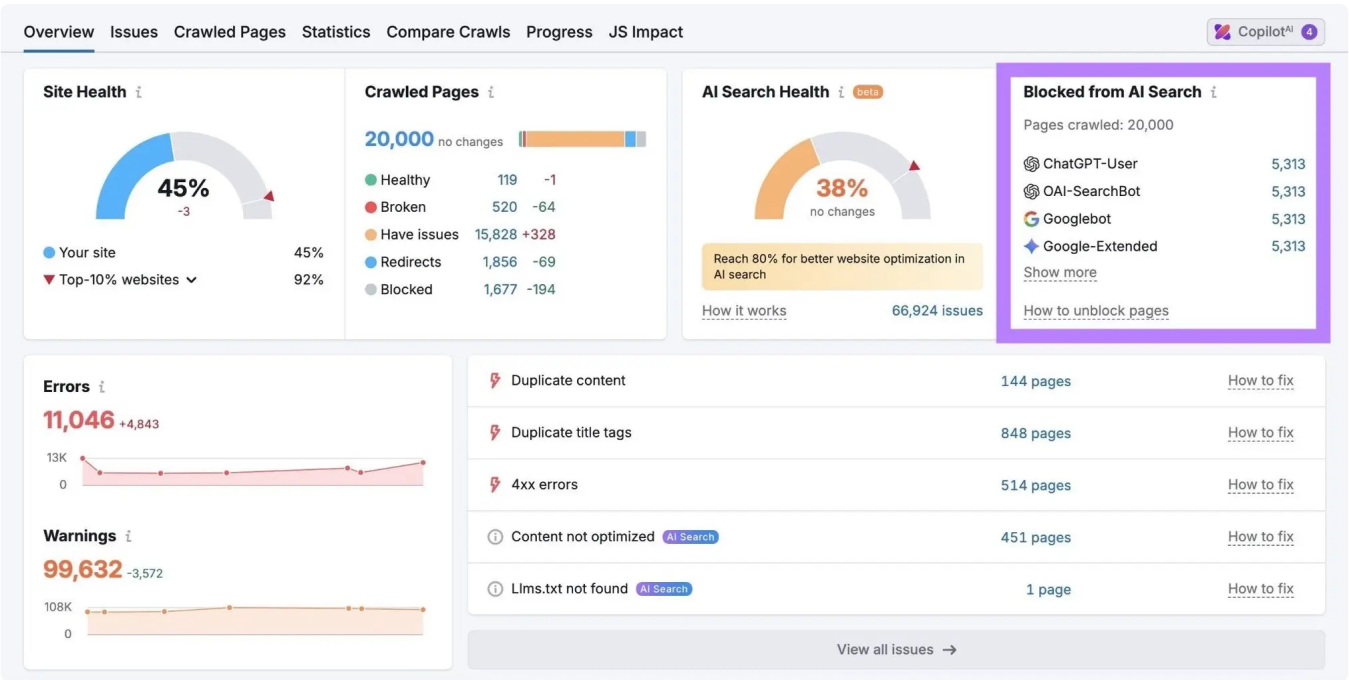
Mentions by Country

Country	Mentions
US	78.3% 22.9K
CA	8.4% 2.5K
UK	3.2% 931
Other	10.1% 2.9K

Enterprise AI Optimization: For enterprise teams — track AI mentions and citations, analyze sentiment, benchmark against competitors, identify AI content gaps, and track footprint changes across AI system changes.



Site Audit: Detects whether your firewalls block AI crawlers and diagnose dozens of other technical SEO issues.



Share



Alex Lindley
Alex is a managing editor with 10+ years of experience leading content and SEO teams. He focuses on building AI-aware editorial systems that help teams produce original, high-impact content as search evolves.

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