GUIDES

Good SEO is good GEO: what Google said in 2026

By Erik Mäkitalo, founder of Mandalytics · Updated 3 November 2026 · 5 min read

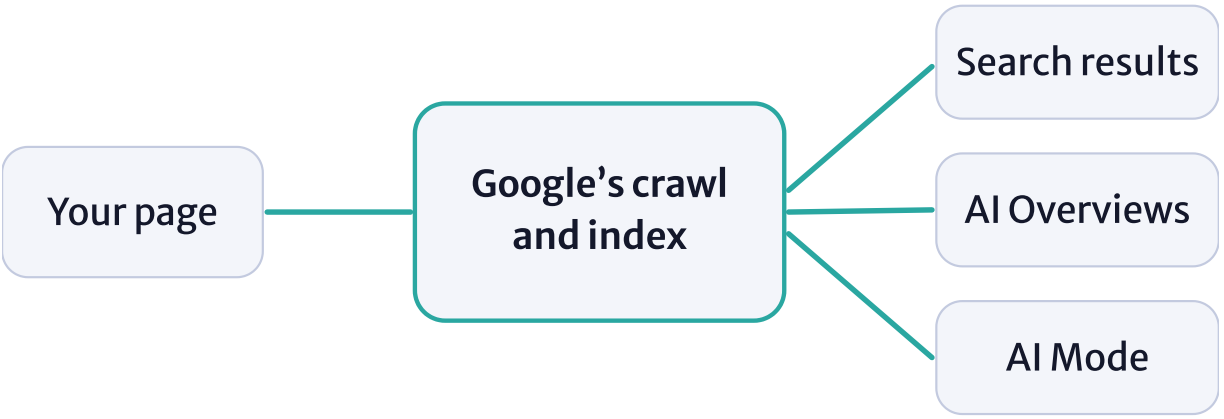
THE SHORT ANSWER

Google has said that AI Overviews and AI Mode use the same crawl and index as normal search, with no extra technical requirements. In plain words: if your pages are useful, accurate and easy to read, you are already doing most of what AI search rewards. There are no secret tricks to buy, and a few popular "AI hacks" are not worth your time.

What did Google actually say?

At Search Central Live in 2026, Google's speakers made a handful of points that are easy to act on (as reported by Arvow's notes from Barcelona):

- **The same foundation.** AI Overviews and AI Mode are built on the same crawl and index as regular search. There is no special file or setting to add.
- **One strong page beats many thin ones.** AI search breaks a question into smaller searches (this is called "query fan-out"). A page that also answers the next questions a buyer would ask matches more of them. Building a separate page for each tiny question is treated as spam.
- **Facts in readable text.** Prices, sizes, who it suits, honest comparisons. Product data quality has been raised for AI Mode.
- **Effort, originality and accuracy decide quality**, not whether a person or a tool typed the words.
- **Patience.** A refreshed page takes about 30 days to be recrawled, and recovering from a core update takes three to six months.



Google says its AI answers use the same crawl and index as normal search, so the same good pages serve both.

What should I do because of this?

1. **Improve your best pages instead of adding more.** Pick the page that matters most to your business. Add the answers to the next three questions a customer would ask, with real details: prices, steps, who it is for.
2. **Be specific.** Use the swap test: could a competitor paste this sentence on their own site unchanged? "Licensed and insured" and "over 20 years of experience" fail. Named people, price ranges, guarantee terms and areas you serve pass.
3. **Keep the basics healthy.** Pages that load, titles that say what the page is about, working links. This is still what Google crawls first.
4. **Update with a date.** Refresh important pages and show the "updated" date. AI tools favour fresher pages.

What can I safely skip?

Popular advice	Our honest take
Add an llms.txt file	No AI company has said it uses it, and Google did not mention it. Harmless, but not worth your hour.

Popular advice	Our honest take
Add schema markup as an AI shortcut	Structured data helps when it matches what the page shows (products, prices, reviews). On its own it showed no measurable lift in AI citations.
Write one page per AI question	Google treats pages built to catch single fan-out questions as spam. Write one strong page instead.
Buy or swap links, auto-publish AI articles	Against Google's rules, and not steps you can be proud of.

Is there anything different about GEO?

Yes, a little. Studies of AI answers suggest that other sites mentioning you matters a lot, that content with tables, lists and named sources gets quoted more, and that each AI tool has favourite sources of its own. We cover this in How AI tools decide which sites to name. Treat the numbers from those studies as direction, not law: most come from companies that sell SEO tools.

Frequently asked questions

Do I need a different website for AI search?

No. AI answers from Google use the same index as normal search. Focus on useful, accurate, well-structured pages.

Does it matter whether a person or an AI wrote the content?

Google says quality is judged on effort, originality and accuracy, not on who typed it. Mass-produced pages with nothing new to say are the problem.

Want these steps as a weekly to-do list for your own site?

Reading this is already a step forward. Mandalytics checks your website in Google and in AI tools every week, then sends the five tasks that will bring you the most visitors, each with the reason why and the steps to do it. You learn as you go, and every small win brings more visitors, more customers and, in the end, more revenue.

See how Mandalytics works

Where this comes from

- Arvow: Search Central Live Barcelona 2026 takeaways
- Arvow: Local SEO for AI Overviews (the swap test)
- Google: Search Console generative AI performance reports