

SEO vs. AEO vs. GEO: The Evolution of Search



	 SEO: Search Engine Optimization	 AEO: Answer Engine Optimization	 GEO: Generative Engine Optimization
PRIMARY GOAL	Rank target URLs in top positions on traditional SERPs.	Win featured snippets and direct answers for specific questions.	Earn citations, recommendations, and brand share within AI-generated responses.
TARGET ENGINE	Algorithmic web crawlers (Googlebot, Bingbot).	Extraction parsers, voice assistants, and SERP QA widgets.	LLMs paired with real-time RAG pipelines (ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, Claude).
MECHANISM	Inverted keyword indexing, link graphs, and user engagement signals.	Passage retrieval, schema validation, and semantic question-matching.	Vector embeddings, semantic similarity scoring, neural reranking, and multi-source synthesis.
CONTENT SCOPE	Comprehensive, keyword-targeted pages and technical site health.	Concise, self-contained 40–60 word answer blocks and inverted-pyramid passages.	Proprietary data, primary research, expert quotations, statistics, and entity authority.
OPTIMIZATION FOCUS	First-party owned media (on-site pages and technical code).	On-page answer micro-formatting, FAQ blocks, and JSON-LD schema.	Holistic digital footprint: owned content plus third-party consensus, reviews, and PR.
OUTPUT TYPE	Ranked list of clickable links ("10 blue links").	Direct snippet or voice response with single source attribution.	Custom-synthesized narrative blending multiple sources with inline citations.
DOMINANT KPI	SERP rank (#1–#10), organic sessions, and organic CTR.	Snippet win rate, zero-click answer impressions, and brand attribution.	Citation Inclusion Rate (%), Share of Voice (SoV), and prompt sentiment.