

BROWN BEAR DIGITAL

The GEO Audit: 12 Site Checks

Find out whether AI assistants can reach, read, and correctly describe your website, using only a browser.

A site owner's guide | 2026 edition

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The short answer

01

This is Brown Bear's audit for finding out whether AI assistants can reach, read, and correctly describe your website. It has 12 checks, each with a test you run yourself, a threshold, and a clear failure condition. Every check runs in a browser with free tools. No subscription, no signup, no score gated behind an email address.

What to do:

1

Run the checks in phase order.

Access, extraction, entity, corroboration. Stop at your first failure.

2

Score by the earliest phase you failed.

Not by the total. Everything after that phase is unreachable until it is fixed.

3

Fix the earliest failed phase first.

Within a phase, fix whatever is free before whatever costs money.

4

Re-run on a schedule.

Failed checks again in 2 weeks. The whole audit quarterly, or after any site migration.

WHAT 33,000 AI CITATIONS SHOWED

When Brown Bear classified 33,000 AI citations for medical practices, the practice's own website was a small minority of what got cited. A large share of what an assistant knows about a business comes from pages the business does not own. That is why half of this audit looks off your site.

Who this guide is for

Any business owner or marketer who suspects something is wrong with their AI visibility but cannot name it. Anyone asked to run a GEO audit with no budget, since the whole list is free. And anyone running this for a client, where the order matters more than the score.

How to run this audit

02

Work through the four phases in order and stop at your first failure. The phases are sequential, not parallel. If AI crawlers cannot reach your site, nothing you score in the later phases can help you, because none of it is being read.

Phase	Checks	Question it answers	If it fails
Access	1 to 3	Can a machine reach and read the page at all	→ Stop. Nothing downstream matters yet
Extraction	4 to 6	Can it lift a clean answer once it is there	→ You get read and passed over
Entity	7 to 9	Does it know who you are	→ You get read but not identified
Corroboration	10 to 12	Does anyone else confirm it	→ You get identified but not recommended

A site that fails check 1 and passes the other 11 is not scoring 11 out of 12. It is scoring zero, because it is invisible.

Why most GEO checklists cannot be run

Most published GEO audit checklists list desired states rather than tests. The most structured one ranking for this search scores 38 items across five sections and does not supply a single concrete test. One item says your homepage should clearly state what your business does in the first 100 words, with no definition of clearly, no threshold, and no method. You cannot score that. You can only agree with it. The most thorough page does better and still makes only 3 of its 9 areas genuinely checkable.

SCORE EVERY CHECK THE SAME WAY

Pass, partly, or fail. This guide tells you what is broken. The companion piece, How to Optimize Your Website for AI Search, covers how to repair each one.

Phase 1: Access

Can a machine reach and read the page at all?

03

CHECK 1

Can any crawler reach your site

THE TEST

Type your domain followed by `/robots.txt`. Read the whole file, usually under 30 lines.

PASS

Your content paths are reachable.

FAIL

Disallow: / under User-agent: *, or a disallow covering pages you want cited.

Fail here and nothing else matters yet.

CHECK 2

Are the AI crawlers specifically blocked

THE TEST

Ctrl+F the same file for GPTBot, ClaudeBot, PerplexityBot, CCBot, and Google-Extended.

PASS

None are blocked, or the blocks are intentional.

FAIL

Blocks nobody decided on, which usually arrive with a plugin or a host's default.

A block should be one you remember making.

CHECK 3

Does your content exist without JavaScript

THE TEST

Ctrl+U on the page, then Ctrl+F for an exact phrase from the middle of your copy.

PASS

The sentence is there in the raw HTML.

FAIL

The source is mostly script tags and your copy is absent.

The fix is a rendering decision.

WHAT GOOGLE-EXTENDED ACTUALLY CONTROLS

Google's crawler documentation says Google-Extended does not affect inclusion in Google Search and is not a ranking signal. It is also not purely a training control. It governs training for Gemini models *and* grounding in Gemini Apps and Grounding with Google Search on Vertex AI, which is live retrieval. The documentation does not mention AI Overviews in connection with it at all, so treat any claim about AI Overviews and Google-Extended as unsupported.

Picture a practice that relaunched its site last spring. The staging server's blanket disallow was copied to production, and for four months the site was live, indexed nowhere, and invisible to every assistant. Nobody checked the one file that takes ten seconds to read.

Phase 2: Extraction

Can it lift a clean answer once it is there?

A machine lifting an answer takes the passage that answers cleanly. These three checks run on your key pages.

Check	The test	Pass	Fail
4. Does each section answer its own heading	→ Count your H2s, then count how many are answered within their first two sentences	More than half	Half or fewer
5. Do your headings match how people ask	→ List your headings in isolation and read them out loud	A stranger could tell what each section answers	Labels like "Our Process," "Overview," or "Considerations"
6. Is comparative information in a table	→ Search key pages for "versus," "compared to," "the difference between"	The comparison is in a table or a clean list	It is a paragraph

A section that spends three paragraphs on context before the point is a section that gets skipped in favour of a competitor who did not make it work.

Notes on these checks

- ◆ **Check 4** is countable in about five minutes on a single page. It is the only check here with a genuinely arbitrary threshold, which is stated so you can disagree with it.
- ◆ **Check 5:** labels describe a container rather than an answer, so they do not map to how anyone phrases a query.
- ◆ **Check 6:** comparisons of options, prices, timelines, or types written as prose are harder to lift than the same content in a table.

Phase 3: Entity

Does it know who you are?

Check 7: Is your name, address and phone identical everywhere

Test: search your business name in quotes, open the first ten results, and compare name, address, and phone against your Google Business Profile, character by character. Suite numbers, abbreviations, and a different phone number all count. **Pass:** one consistent version. **Fail:** two or more variants in the first ten results.

Check 8: Can you be confused with a similar business

Test: in two or three assistants, ask "tell me about [your exact business name] in [your city]."
Pass: it describes you, and the facts are yours.
Fail: it describes someone else, mixes two businesses, or hedges because it cannot tell them apart.

Check 9: Are the profiles that describe you accurate

Test: search your business name plus each major directory and association in your category, and open each profile. Look for a stale address, a discontinued service, an old credential, or a wrong phone number. **Pass:** everything you control is current. **Fail:** anything editable is wrong. Split the list as you go: what you can edit, and what you cannot. The second list is usually longer than people expect.

THE MOST COMMON FINDING

In Bryan's experience running these audits, name, address, and phone consistency is the single most common finding. It is almost never the thing the client expected to be wrong, and it is also the cheapest to fix.

Nobody runs check 8, and it explains the strangest results. Consider a surgeon whose practice shares a surname with an unrelated dermatology group two towns over. Every assistant blends them. No amount of on-page work fixes that, because the machine has one entity where there should be two.

Phase 4: Corroboration

Does anyone else confirm it?

5 of 20

recent reviews must name both a specific service and a specific location to pass check 10.

3 or more

answers citing a source that does not list you is a fail on check 11.

Thresholds from Brown Bear's GEO audit. A single wrong claim fails check 12.

Check 10: Do your reviews name the service and the place

Test: read your 20 most recent reviews and count the specific ones. **Pass:** 5 or more name both. **Fail:** fewer than 5. Generic praise is pleasant and carries almost no information a model can attribute to a service you want to be known for.

Check 11: Do you appear where your category gets compared

Test: run five "best [your category] in [your city]" prompts, record every source the answers cite, then visit each. **Pass:** you are present and accurate on the recurring sources. **Fail:** a source appears in 3 or more answers and does not list you. The useful output is the source list, which shows where answers about your category are assembled.

Check 12: Is anything they say about you out of date

Test: ask three assistants to describe your business, then fact-check every claim. **Pass:** nothing is wrong. **Fail:** anything is, because a confident wrong answer costs more than no answer. Watch for old locations, services you no longer offer, staff who have left, and credentials that have changed.

Your GEO audit scorecard

07

Mark each check pass, partly, or fail, then read the result by phase rather than as a total. The earliest phase you failed is your real score, because everything after it is unreachable until it is fixed.

Question	Pass	Partly	Fail
PHASE 1: ACCESS			
1. Robots.txt leaves your content paths reachable, with no blanket disallow.	☐	☐	☐
2. Any block on GPTBot, ClaudeBot, PerplexityBot, CCBot, or Google-Extended is one you decided on.	☐	☐	☐
3. A phrase from the middle of your copy appears in the raw page source.	☐	☐	☐
PHASE 2: EXTRACTION			
4. More than half your H2s are answered within their first two sentences.	☐	☐	☐
5. A stranger could tell what each section answers from its heading alone.	☐	☐	☐
6. Comparisons of options, prices, timelines, or types sit in a table or clean list.	☐	☐	☐
PHASE 3: ENTITY			
7. The first ten results for your name show one version of name, address, and phone.	☐	☐	☐
8. Assistants asked about your business by name and city describe you, not someone else.	☐	☐	☐
9. Every third-party profile you can edit is current.	☐	☐	☐
PHASE 4: CORROBORATION			
10. At least 5 of your 20 most recent reviews name a service and a location.	☐	☐	☐
11. You appear, accurately, on sources cited in 3 or more "best" answers.	☐	☐	☐
12. Three assistant descriptions of your business contain no wrong claims.	☐	☐	☐

PASS

PARTLY

FAIL

What to fix first

08

Fix the earliest failed phase first, and only then move down. Six of the 12 checks are on your own site and six are off it, which is why half the audit is slower to fix.

Failed in access or extraction

On-site work, largely technical, and the half you or your developer can finish without anyone's permission. Fix robots.txt today, settle the rendering question next, then work through answer placement page by page.

Failed in entity or corroboration

Your site is fine and your problem is off it. That work is slower, mostly outside your direct control, and not fixable by publishing anything. Start with profiles you can edit, list the ones you cannot, and expect movement in weeks rather than days.

- 1 **Note the earliest phase you failed** and ignore every later failure for now.
- 2 **Inside that phase, do the free items first.**
- 3 **Re-run only the failed checks in two weeks**, not the whole audit.
- 4 **Re-run the whole audit quarterly**, or after any site migration.

What this audit cannot tell you

- ◆ **It is a snapshot.** Assistant answers vary between runs and users, so checks 8, 11, and 12 are one observation each. Run them monthly before drawing a trend.
- ◆ **It cannot see authority.** Whether your category considers you credible is the slowest and most important input, and it is not auditable from a browser.
- ◆ **It cannot see the competition.** A clean 12 out of 12 still loses to a competitor with the same clean sheet and ten years of third-party presence.

Frequently asked questions

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Q How often should I run a GEO audit?

Quarterly for the full 12, and immediately after any site migration or rebuild. Re-run individual failed checks two weeks after fixing them rather than repeating the whole list.

Q Do I need a tool to do this?

No. Every check runs in a browser with free tools, which is why the list is 12 items rather than 38. Tools become worth buying when you have enough locations that manual checking stops being practical.

Q Should I check structured data?

It is worth keeping tidy, but it is not a gate and it is not in these 12. Google's guidance states structured data is not required for generative AI search. Bryan has made that argument to clients for two years, before the documentation said it.

Q Which of the 12 matters most?

Whichever one you failed earliest. The order is the point. A failure in access makes everything after it unreachable, so there is no universal answer.

Q Can I run this on a competitor?

Most of it, yes, and it is a useful exercise. Check 7 needs their Google Business Profile as the reference point, which you can see. Check 9 needs to know what they can edit, which you cannot.

Q What will I have at the end?

A number out of 12, a named first fix, and a clear sense of which parts of your visibility problem this audit cannot see. It tells you whether anything is broken, not whether you are winning.

Next steps

10

- 1 **Run the scorecard** on the previous pages, starting at check 1.
- 2 **Stop at your first failure** and name it as your first fix.
- 3 **Talk to someone who does this work.** A real conversation about the failures you found and how to deal with them.

WORK WITH BROWN BEAR

Most of what we find in a paid audit is on this list, which is why the list is public. What we add is the part that does not fit in a browser: the profiles nobody remembered creating, the records you have no login to correct, and the same 12 checks run across a dozen locations.

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AI assistant answers vary between runs and between users. Treat any single check of an assistant's answer as one observation, not a measurement.