

# AIO vs SEO vs GEO vs AEO: Complete Comparison 2026

Understand how the four visibility disciplines overlap, differ, and complement each other

**40%**

Recommended budget allocation to GEO/AIO

**67%**

UK searches involving AI features in 2026

**3x**

Faster growth of GEO vs traditional SEO

**2026**

Year AIO became the primary discipline

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## The Four Disciplines: An Overview

Discipline	Full Name	Optimises For	Primary Focus	2026 Status
SEO	Search Engine Optimisation	Traditional search rankings (Google, Bing)	Keywords, backlinks, technical health	Foundation — essential
AEO	Answer Engine Optimisation	Voice & AI answer engines (Siri, Alexa, featured snippets)	FAQ schema, concise Q&A, voice-friendly structure	Baseline — table stakes
GEO	Generative Engine Optimisation	Generative AI platforms (ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude)	Information gain, entity authority, llms.txt, conversational depth	Primary — fastest growing
AIO	AI Optimisation	Complete AI ecosystem + acquisition intelligence	All of the above + pipeline attribution + agentic AI	Strategic umbrella framework

## SEO: The Foundation

SEO remains relevant in 2026, but its role has shifted. Pages that rank in traditional search are more likely to be cited by AI platforms — traditional SEO and AIO are complementary, not competing. However, optimising only for SEO leaves you invisible in the AI-native discovery channels that are growing fastest.

**Key shift in 2026:** 67% of UK searches now involve AI features. Strong traditional SEO feeds AI visibility, but AI-specific optimisation (GEO/AIO) requires additional dedicated strategy.

## AEO: Answer Engine Focus

AEO was the precursor to GEO and AIO. Its principles — question-answer structure, FAQ schema, concise factual answers — remain valid and are incorporated into modern AIO strategy. Think of AEO as table-stakes hygiene that every brand should have before advancing to GEO and AIO.

## GEO: Generative AI Platforms

GEO is currently the fastest-growing visibility discipline. It optimises specifically for LLM-powered platforms — ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude, and Copilot. The core GEO levers are information gain (unique insights), entity authority (verifiable identity), and machine-readable content structure.

## AIO: The Complete Framework

AIO encompasses all of the above plus the full technical stack and acquisition intelligence layer. AIO treats AI visibility holistically — across all platforms, all query types, and connected to actual business outcomes. It's the strategic framework within which GEO, AEO, and SEO operate as components.

Dimension	SEO	AEO	GEO	AIO
Primary platform	Google, Bing	Voice assistants, snippets	ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity	All AI systems + agentic
Content focus	Keywords, backlinks	Short Q&A; answers	Information gain, depth	Full stack
Technical must-haves	Sitemap, robots.txt	FAQ schema, structured markup	llms.txt, JSON-LD, entity schema	All + crawl access
Measurement	Rankings, CTR, traffic	Featured snippet presence	AI citation rate, share of voice	Pipeline attribution + all above
2026 growth trajectory	Stable / declining	Stable	Growing fast	Essential

## Budget Allocation Recommendation 2026

<p><b>40%</b></p> <p>GEO/AIO (primary growth lever)</p>	<p><b>40%</b></p> <p>Technical SEO (foundation)</p>	<p><b>20%</b></p> <p>AEO (table stakes hygiene)</p>
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## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Should I abandon SEO for AIO?**

No — SEO and AIO are complementary. Strong technical SEO (fast pages, clean structure, quality content) directly improves AI visibility. The differences are in measurement and content strategy, not in abandoning SEO fundamentals. Run both programmes in parallel.

**Q: Is GEO the same as AIO?**

GEO is a subset of AIO. GEO focuses specifically on generative AI platforms like ChatGPT and Gemini. AIO covers the complete AI visibility ecosystem including voice, agentic AI, and acquisition intelligence.

**Q: How do I explain AIO to my board?**

AIO is the 2026 version of SEO — it ensures your brand appears when potential customers search for solutions using AI assistants. Like SEO drove organic traffic, AIO drives AI-referred pipeline. The measurement is AI Share of Voice and citation-to-conversion rate.

### About the Author

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