

Artificial intelligence is rapidly turning traditional search engines into quaint artifacts.

Extension Essentials is a curated series of resources and publications from the Extension Foundation, designed to empower and support Extension professionals in delivering impactful programs, advancing innovation, and fostering community engagement across diverse areas of expertise.

AI Optimization

We don't Google anymore. We Gemini, we ChatGPT, and we ask ExtensionBot. And we're often asking long, hyperspecific questions that start with phrases like *Why should I _____?*, *How can I _____?*, and *What is the best way to _____?*

So, instead of optimizing their websites for search engines with keywords, Extension content creators need to optimize for this new way of querying and AI's way of crawling for content.

Generative engine optimization—GEO as opposed to SEO—is a multilayered process, but here are four things you can do right now to make sure your Extension website content has a stronger chance of coming up in AI search results:

1. Get your headers straight.

- Apply the H1, H2, H3 hierarchy to the headers on your pages. AI specifically searches for styled headers.
- The top, or H1, header should be a five- to seven-word title—for example: Small Grains Variety Performance Guide.
- About half of your subsequent, or H2/H3, headers, should be framed as the kind of question someone would type into an AI search bar—for example: *What Does Rose Rosette Disease Look Like?*

2. Lead with the answer.

The copy underneath headers should directly answer the explicit or implied question in the header. Example: *If your rose has Rose Rosette disease, it might have bright red new growth, distorted leaves, excessive thorniness, and stunted flowers.*

3. Mind your FAQs.

AI systems primarily use Frequently Asked Questions to extract and cite citable answers to users' questions.

- Add four to six pairs of questions and answers to a fact sheet or to your overall site to increase its visibility to AI.
- Use conversational language—don't stuff your copy with jargon or keywords you think people should hear.

4. Link to it—don't copy it.

Instead of republishing a fact sheet from the state Extension office website on a county website, simply link to the original fact sheet. The AI search tools are very good at detecting and bypassing duplicate content.