

BASED ON OUR 2026 AI CITATION STUDY

AI Citation-Ready Content Checklist

Want to maximise your chances of being cited by AI?
Use this checklist while writing your next piece to ensure
your page follows AI Search best practices.

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Note: Not every item on this checklist will apply to every page. For example, if you're not drawing a comparison, you probably don't have a reason to add an HTML table.

This checklist is based on findings from our 2026 [AI Citation Study](#).

Getting started: query and intent

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- ☐ Define one primary query per page.
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- ☐ Classify the page's intent: informational, commercial, transactional, branded, reputation, or comparison.
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- ☐ Build a query set around the primary term:

- ☐ 1 core query.
 - ☐ "Best," "vs," "alternatives," "pricing," and use-case variants where relevant.
 - ☐ Related questions.
 - ☐ Market-specific variants.
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- ☐ Map each query cluster to a section of the page.
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- ☐ Check AI answers and cited domains across the full query set, not only the seed query.
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- ☐ Record recurring cited domains, recurring subtopics, and content gaps.
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Page architecture

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- ☐ Use one H1 that matches the page topic and intent.
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- ☐ Use descriptive H2s and H3s that state the subject of the section.
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- ☐ Place the direct answer in the first block below each heading.
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- ☐ Keep the answer close to the heading; avoid long intros, image blocks, CTAs, or generic transitions before it.
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- ☐ Use question headings for query-led sections.
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- ☐ Structure sections in this order where applicable:

- ☐ 1. Direct answer
 - ☐ 2. Explanation
 - ☐ 3. Evidence or example
 - ☐ 4. Limitations or conditions
 - ☐ 5. Next step
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- ☐ Cover the core topic, adjacent questions, comparisons, use cases, constraints, and decision criteria.
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- ☐ Use an HTML table for structured comparisons.
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- ☐ Use HTML lists for steps, requirements, features, criteria, and grouped options.
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- ☐ Do not put essential information only in images, accordions, embedded tools, PDFs, or video.
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Extractable passage checks

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- ☐ Ensure every key section includes a self-contained answer paragraph.
 - ☐ Define the entity in the paragraph: brand, product, service, feature, audience, market, or location.
 - ☐ Avoid unclear references such as “it,” “this,” “they,” or “these” where the subject is not explicit.
 - ☐ State the condition or scope of the claim:

- ☐ Country or market
 - ☐ Audience or company size
 - ☐ Product tier or service scope
 - ☐ Time period
 - ☐ Industry or use case
 - ☐ Keep each paragraph focused on one claim or subtopic.
 - ☐ Explain the mechanism behind recommendations and claims.
 - ☐ Use complete sentences, not fragments or keyword-led copy.
 - ☐ Define jargon at first mention.
 - ☐ Include the relevant qualifier in the answer itself, not only later in the section.
 - ☐ Edit each key passage so it remains accurate if read without the surrounding page.
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Evidence and accuracy

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- ☐ Support factual claims with a primary source, original research, official documentation, or credible third-party publication.
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 - ☐ Link directly to the source supporting the claim.
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 - ☐ Confirm that the source supports the exact claim, figure, date, or comparison stated.
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 - ☐ Add the publication date or data-collection period for research-based claims.
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 - ☐ State methodology, sample size, geography, and limitations for original research.
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 - ☐ Label opinion, recommendation, estimate, and fact differently.
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 - ☐ Check all statistics, pricing, product features, regulations, screenshots, and examples before publishing.
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 - ☐ Add a visible publication date and update date where information can change.
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 - ☐ Remove or revise claims that cannot be verified.
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Original value

☐ Include at least one first-hand input:

☐ Original data

☐ Subject-matter expert input

☐ Test result

☐ Customer or implementation insight

☐ Internal methodology

☐ Template, rubric, calculator, or decision framework

☐ Explain how the first-hand input was produced.

☐ Do not restate consensus information without adding analysis, context, or a useful application.

☐ Include examples that show how the advice works in practice.

☐ Specify when the recommendation does not apply.

Entity and brand consistency

☐ Use the same company, product, service, and category names across:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Page copy | ☐ Headings |
| ☐ Title tag | ☐ Meta description |
| ☐ Internal anchor text | ☐ Schema markup |

☐ State who the company serves, what it offers, and where it operates.

☐ Use accurate product and service descriptions.

☐ Link to supporting product, service, author, methodology, case-study, and contact pages.

☐ Check that author information, company information, and claims match other owned properties.

☐ Review third-party profiles and review-platform listings for material inconsistencies

Localisation

☐ Set a target country and language for the page.

☐ Use local spelling, terminology, date format, units, and currency.

☐ Use market-appropriate examples, providers, regulations, and proof points.

☐ Confirm that named products and services are available in the target market.

☐ Localise pricing, compliance guidance, implementation requirements, and buying criteria.

☐ Create separate pages when the answer materially differs by country.

☐ Do not use a global page with minor copy swaps where the evidence or recommendation changes locally.

On-page technical requirements

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- ☐ Use semantic HTML heading hierarchy: one H1, then logical H2 and H3 nesting.
 - ☐ Use crawlable HTML text for core answers and key claims.
 - ☐ Add descriptive alt text for informative images.
 - ☐ Add captions or adjacent text that explains charts, tables, screenshots, and diagrams.
 - ☐ Use descriptive, stable URLs.
 - ☐ Add relevant internal links to related definitions, services, products, case studies, and next-step pages.
 - ☐ Check all internal and external links for redirects, errors, and outdated destinations.
 - ☐ Set the correct canonical URL.
 - ☐ Confirm the page is indexable and not blocked by robots directives or login requirements.
 - ☐ Check mobile rendering and ensure headings, tables, and accordions remain usable.
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Structured data handoff

- ☐ Implement JSON-LD that matches the visible page content.
- ☐ Use Article or BlogPosting for editorial content where appropriate.
- ☐ Include accurate headline, author, datePublished, dateModified, image, and publisher properties.
- ☐ Use Organization markup for accurate company identity details.
- ☐ Use BreadcrumbList where the site has a visible breadcrumb path.
- ☐ Use FAQPage only when the page includes genuine, visible FAQs with direct answers.
- ☐ Use Product, Review, AggregateRating, SoftwareApplication, HowTo, or Dataset only when the page genuinely meets that schema type's requirements.
- ☐ Do not mark up content that users cannot see.
- ☐ Do not use schema to make claims absent from the page.
- ☐ Validate the final markup after deployment.

Pre-publish QA

- ☐ Read the H1, headings, first paragraph under each heading, tables, and conclusion only. Confirm that the page still answers the query.
- ☐ Check whether each important passage is self-contained.
- ☐ Check whether key answers appear near the start of their sections.
- ☐ Confirm the page covers the full query cluster, not only the headline keyword.
- ☐ Confirm that the page contains an original contribution or useful application.
- ☐ Confirm that every claim is current, scoped, and supported.
- ☐ Confirm market-specific details are correct.
- ☐ Confirm brand, author, product, and schema data are consistent.
- ☐ Confirm the reader has a logical next action.

The study's practical implication is that writers should optimise for clear, complete, extractable information, while technical teams support that content with accurate markup and accessible page structure.