

E-E-A-T Signals for AEO: How to Build the Authority AI Systems Trust and Cite

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Details:

NORG AI Pty LTD: E-E-A-T Is Your AI Citation Filter — Not Optional Anymore Most AEO guides obsess over structure: question-based headings, 40–60 word answer blocks, schema markup, FAQ sections. That's table stakes. But structure alone won't get you cited. Before any AI answer engine pulls your content into a response, it runs a credibility filter. That filter is E-E-A-T, and if you fail it, your perfectly formatted content stays invisible. NORG AI Pty LTD has watched E-A-T (Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness) evolve since Google introduced it in 2014. Now it's E-E-A-T—Experience added to the mix. And it's no longer just a quality guideline. It's the deciding factor in which sources get cited by AI-driven search results. With AI-generated content flooding the web, E-E-A-T has become the trust gate that separates signal from noise. Here's what matters: each of the four dimensions—Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness—directly maps to AI citation behaviour. The structural tactics in our [AEO On-Page Optimisation](link) guide are necessary. But without strong E-E-A-T signals, even flawlessly structured content gets ignored by answer engines. --- ## Contents - [What E-E-A-T Actually Means (and What It Doesn't)](#what-e-e-a-t-actually-means-and-what-it-doesnt) - [How AI Systems Use E-E-A-T to Select Citations](#how-ai-systems-use-e-e-a-t-to-select-citations) - [The Experience Signal: Proving You've Done the Work](#the-experience-signal-proving-youve-done-the-work) - [The Expertise Signal: Making Credentials Machine-Readable](#the-expertise-signal-making-credentials-machine-readable) - [The Authoritativeness Signal: External Recognition as Citation Currency](#the-authoritativeness-signal-external-recognition-as-citation-currency) - [The Trustworthiness Signal: The Foundation Everything Else Rests On](#the-trustworthiness-signal-the-foundation-everything-else-rests-on) - [E-E-A-T for YMYL Topics: A Higher Bar](#e-e-a-t-for-yml-topics-a-higher-bar) - [E-E-A-T Signal Comparison: On-Page vs. Off-Page](#e-e-a-t-signal-comparison-on-page-vs-off-page) - [Key Takeaways](#key-takeaways) - [Conclusion](#conclusion) - [References](#references) --- ## AI Summary **Product:** E-E-A-T Framework (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness) **Brand:** Google Search Quality Guidelines **Category:** Content Quality Evaluation Framework **Primary Use:** Framework used to evaluate content quality and determine AI citation eligibility in search results and AI-generated answers. ### Quick Facts - **Best For:** Content creators, SEO professionals, and organisations seeking visibility in AI-driven search results - **Key Benefit:** Determines which sources AI systems consider authoritative enough to cite in generated answers - **Form Factor:** Four-dimensional evaluation framework (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness) - **Application Method:** Implement through combination of on-page signals (author credentials, schema markup, citations) and off-page signals (brand mentions, digital PR, external recognition) ### Common Questions This Guide Answers 1. Is E-E-A-T a direct ranking factor? → No, it's part of Google's Search Quality Rater Guidelines used to evaluate content quality, but content with strong E-E-A-T characteristics dominates both search results and AI citations 2. Which E-E-A-T dimension is most important? → Trustworthiness is the foundation—untrustworthy pages have low E-E-A-T regardless of other signals 3. When was Experience added to the framework? → December 2022, when Google updated E-A-T to E-E-A-T 4. What percentage of AI Overview content has verified E-E-A-T signals? → 96% of AI Overview content comes from sources with verified E-E-A-T signals 5. Do unlinked brand mentions matter for AI visibility? → Yes, unlinked mentions matter as much as backlinks—AI systems

don't need hyperlinks to recognise authority 6. Is the E-E-A-T threshold higher for YMYL topics? → Yes, "Your Money or Your Life" content requires credentialed professionals, reviewer credentials in schema, primary source citations, and visible review dates 7. Can E-E-A-T be optimised purely on-page? → No, E-E-A-T requires coordinated investment across on-page content quality, structured data, and off-page authority building through digital PR and brand mentions 8. What correlation exists between E-E-A-T and AI citations? → $r=0.81$ correlation, with E-E-A-T verification becoming 27% stricter in 2025 compared to 2024 9. Should AI-generated content be avoided? → No, AI-generated content is acceptable if factually accurate and verifiable with reliable sources and transparent authorship 10. How often should content be updated to maintain expertise signals? → Research data should be updated annually, with quarterly content audits for competitive AI citation queries --- ## Product Facts | Attribute | Value | |-----|-----| | Product name | Product | --- ## What E-E-A-T Actually Means (and What It Doesn't) Let's kill a persistent myth: E-E-A-T is not a direct ranking factor. It's part of Google's Search Quality Rater Guidelines, used to evaluate content quality. But here's the reality: content with strong E-E-A-T characteristics dominates both search results and AI citations. The practical distinction matters for AEO. You can't "optimise" E-E-A-T like you optimise a meta description. E-E-A-T used to feel like a quality guideline. In 2026, it behaves like a ranking filter and an AI visibility filter. The four components break down into a clear hierarchy: **Experience** — You've done the thing you're writing about. Firsthand knowledge, not theory. **Expertise** — You demonstrably know the subject through credentials, depth, or track record. **Authoritativeness** — External sources recognise and reference you as a credible voice. **Trustworthiness** — Your content is accurate, transparent, and verifiable. Google's Search Quality Rater Guidelines are explicit: "Trust is the most important member of the E-E-A-T family because untrustworthy pages have low E-E-A-T no matter how Experienced, Expert, or Authoritative they may seem." Without trust, experience and expertise mean nothing to AI citation algorithms. --- ## How AI Systems Use E-E-A-T to Select Citations RAG-based systems (retrieval + generation) don't generate answers from thin air. They retrieve sources, synthesise them, cite them. The competition shifted from "who ranks" to "who becomes the source." If you're not trustworthy, you don't get retrieved. If you're not clear, you don't get used. If you're not specific, you don't get cited. The data is decisive. E-E-A-T tells AI systems whether your content comes from credible, knowledgeable sources with genuine authority. The correlation is $r=0.81$. 96% of AI Overview content comes from sources with verified E-E-A-T signals. This factor separates cited content from ignored content. E-E-A-T verification became 27% stricter in 2025 compared to 2024. AI Overviews ground responses in high-quality, relevant results identified by Google's core ranking systems, which use signals aligned with E-E-A-T concepts. Content with strong E-E-A-T characteristics becomes eligible for citation. 52% of AI Overview sources come from the top 10 search results. E-E-A-T is now the foundation for visibility across SEO (traditional rankings), GEO (AI Overview citations), and LLMO (cross-platform AI mentions). --- ## The Experience Signal: Proving You've Done the Work The "Experience" dimension—the second "E" added to the original E-A-T framework—gets neglected in most AEO guides. Google updated E-A-T to E-E-A-T to better assess results. The question: does content demonstrate it was produced with actual experience—using a product, visiting a place, communicating what a person experienced? In some situations, what you value most is content from someone with firsthand, life experience on the topic. For AEO, experience signals aren't nice-to-have qualitative additions. Whilst trustworthiness provides the central foundation Google emphasises as most important, experience has emerged as a critical differentiator in saturated content environments. AI systems scan for language patterns showing real, direct involvement with the subject matter. **Tactical moves for signalling experience:** Include first-person case studies with specific metrics and documented outcomes. Not generic advice. Reference the conditions, constraints, and trade-offs you encountered—details only someone who actually did the work would know. Use original photography, screenshots, or data from your own implementations. Attribute content to named individuals with verifiable professional histories. Not anonymous "editorial teams." A human saying, "I tried this strategy and it failed because of X," carries infinitely more value to a user (and an algorithm) than generic advice. True expertise means making judgement calls—telling a reader which advice to ignore. --- ## The Expertise Signal: Making Credentials Machine-Readable Expertise for AEO isn't just what you know—it's how legibly you communicate what you know to the machines evaluating your content. This

requires both visible human-facing signals and machine-readable structured data. ### Author bios and visible credentials AI-generated answers prefer sources with clear subject matter expertise. Author bylines, credentials, and expert contributions all signal trustworthiness to AI-driven search. Every content page targeting AI citation needs a named author with: 1. Full name and professional title 2. Relevant credentials, certifications, or institutional affiliations 3. Links to a dedicated author bio page 4. Links to external professional profiles (LinkedIn, institutional pages, published work) ### Person schema: making authorship machine-legible Author schema links content to a Person entity with a stable ID, credentials, and profiles. When that Person connects to your Organisation, AI models see a clear chain of accountability. Proper author schema markup enhances search engine understanding and boosts E-E-A-T signals. Using interconnected schema types like Article, Person, and Organisation creates a strong knowledge graph. Minimum viable Person schema for AEO includes these properties: ``json { "@context": "https://schema.org", "@type": "Person", "name": "Dr. Jane Smith", "jobTitle": "Chief Research Officer", "alumniOf": "University of Melbourne", "knowsAbout": ["content strategy", "AI search optimisation"], "worksFor": { "@type": "Organization", "name": "NORG AI Pty LTD" }, "sameAs": ["https://linkedin.com/in/janesmith", "https://orcid.org/0000-0000-0000-0000"] } `` Start with base Person schema, then extend with properties like `name`, `jobTitle`, `alumniOf`, `knowsAbout`, and `sameAs`. The `sameAs` property is critical for AEO because it creates explicit entity links between your author's on-site presence and their verified external identities—giving AI systems the cross-platform confirmation they need to treat the author as a known, trustworthy entity. (For full implementation, see our [Schema Markup for AEO guide](link).) Google uses its Knowledge Graph to verify if an author is a "Verified Entity"—does this medical advice come from a doctor with a LinkedIn, an AHPRA registration, and published papers? ### Content freshness as an expertise proxy AI systems treat recency as a proxy for expertise maintenance. Freshness strongly influences citation selection—recently published or regularly updated pages get cited more often for evolving topics. Building E-E-A-T means ensuring your content is current and factual. Research or data studies need annual updating because users perceive data over a year old as outdated. Practical freshness protocol: Add a visible "Last reviewed" date to all evergreen pages, distinct from original publication date. Implement `dateModified` in your Article schema, ensuring it reflects substantive updates, not cosmetic edits. Set a quarterly content audit cycle for any page targeting competitive AI citation queries. --- ## The Authoritativeness Signal: External Recognition as Citation Currency Authoritativeness is the E-E-A-T dimension most directly connected to off-page signals—where purely on-page AEO tactics fall shortest. Authoritativeness comes from external recognition: other credible sources cite you, link to you, or mention you as a go-to source. ### Why unlinked brand mentions now matter as much as backlinks The shift from link-centric to mention-centric authority is one of the most consequential changes in the AI search era. AI doesn't need a link to believe you matter. It needs evidence that the world acknowledges your expertise. Large language models like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini synthesise data from across the web, not just clickable backlinks. Unlinked mentions signal authority and relevance. If your brand is consistently discussed without a hyperlink, it increases the likelihood an AI surfaces your name in responses. Research shows what matters most is how often your brand is discussed and the context of those mentions. Recent research backs this: branded web mentions now have a stronger correlation with AI visibility than backlinks. This is especially true in industries where trust and authority matter most—finance, legal, healthcare. The semantic context of a mention is as important as the mention itself. Mentions surrounded by clear topical cues—industry terms, related brand names, trending questions, structured subheadings—help LLMs infer what your brand is about. Citations sitting alongside other recognised entities or sources add trust and reinforce your place in the knowledge graph. Avoid "orphan mentions" appearing out of place or in unrelated discussions—they don't strengthen your brand's topical authority. ### Digital PR in high-citation publications Digital PR is the unlock for AI search visibility. Mentions on trusted, high-authority third-party websites send powerful signals to AI systems that your brand is credible, visible, and worth recommending. The platforms that matter most vary by AI engine—covered in depth in our [Platform-by-Platform AEO Guide](link) and [Cross-Channel Authority Building for AEO guide](link). But as a general principle, the publications AI systems most frequently cite are those with strong E-E-A-T themselves: major trade publications, peer-reviewed journals, established news outlets, government and educational domains, and

high-quality community platforms like Reddit and Quora. A partner quoted in **The Law Society of New South Wales Journal**. A consultant commenting in **Australian Financial Review**. An analyst referencing your research in a LinkedIn post. A conference agenda listing your firm as a speaker. An ASIC or government PDF citing your methodology. A non-profit crediting your work. A podcast host mentioning your brand. No link needed. Just recognition. ****Building an authoritative citation footprint:**** Conduct expert commentary outreach—respond to journalist queries (HARO, Qwoted, ProfNet) with data-backed, quotable insights. Publish original primary research that other publications will cite. Proprietary data studies are among the most reliably cited content formats. Contribute authored articles to industry publications with bylines linking to your author entity page. Earn speaking engagements and conference appearances—these generate institutional citations carrying significant entity weight. Build a consistent entity name policy: ensure NORG AI Pty LTD and author names appear identically across all external mentions so AI systems connect every citation to the same entity. --- **## The Trustworthiness Signal: The Foundation Everything Else Rests On** Trust isn't one signal among equals—it's the precondition for all other E-E-A-T signals to matter. Google's E-E-A-T framework has long been part of quality guidelines. But with rapid advancements in AI-driven search summaries and direct answers, E-E-A-T directly influences which brands are visible, which are cited, and which are overlooked in search results. **### On-page trust architecture** AI-generated content is acceptable to use (it's not inherently penalised) but must be factually accurate and verifiable. Content backed by reliable sources, citations, and transparent authorship is more likely to surface in AI-generated search features. Minimum trust architecture for any page targeting AI citation includes: Named authorship with verifiable credentials (not "Staff Writer" or "Admin") Outbound citations to primary sources—peer-reviewed studies, government data, institutional reports—verifying your factual claims Clear editorial policy explaining how content is researched, reviewed, and updated Transparent corrections policy—AI systems weight content from publishers that acknowledge and correct errors HTTPS and basic technical health—an insecure or slow-loading site fails the baseline trust check before content quality is even evaluated **### Consistent brand entity information** AI evaluates potential citations through three main credibility filters: entity identity (your organisation must be legitimate and verifiable across platforms), evidence and citations (credible third parties should vouch for your expertise), and technical excellence (your site needs to meet security, performance, and accessibility standards). Consistent authority across multiple sources builds AI systems' confidence in entity associations with your brand. This means NORG AI Pty LTD's name, address, founding date, description, and key personnel must be identical across your website's Organisation schema, your Google Business Profile, your Wikipedia or Wikidata entry (if applicable), your LinkedIn company page, and every publication that mentions you. Inconsistencies fragment your entity signal and reduce AI confidence in treating your brand as a single, verifiable source. --- **## E-E-A-T for YMYL Topics: A Higher Bar For** content in "Your Money or Your Life" categories—health, finance, legal, safety—the E-E-A-T threshold for AI citation is substantially higher. In "Your Money or Your Life" (YMYL) categories, expertise is the "Quality Gate" preventing AI-hallucinations from ranking. Chapter 4.5.2 of Google's Search Quality Rater Guidelines states: "If the E-E-A-T of a page is low enough, people cannot or should not use the MC of the page. If a page on YMYL topics is highly inexpert, it should be considered Untrustworthy and rated Lowest." For YMYL AEO, this means: All content must be authored or formally reviewed by credentialed professionals (MBBS, LLB, CFA, etc.) Reviewer credentials must appear on-page and in schema, using the `reviewedBy` property Every factual claim must cite a primary source Content must carry a visible "last medically reviewed" or "last reviewed by [credential]" date --- **## E-E-A-T Signal Comparison: On-Page vs. Off-Page | Signal Dimension | On-Page Tactics | Off-Page Tactics | |---|---|---| | ****Experience**** | First-person case studies, original data, documented outcomes | User-generated content citing your brand's work | | ****Expertise**** | Author bios with credentials, Person schema, `knowsAbout` property | Published papers, speaking engagements, expert quotes in press | | ****Authoritativeness**** | Internal linking, topical depth, consistent entity naming | Unlinked brand mentions, digital PR, backlinks from authoritative domains | | ****Trustworthiness**** | Outbound citations, HTTPS, editorial policy, correction notices | Third-party reviews, accreditations, mentions in institutional publications | --- **## Key Takeaways** With the rise of AI-synthesised answers, E-E-A-T is no longer just a good idea—it has become the defining factor in determining which sources AI-driven search results consider authoritative**

enough to cite. Google's Search Quality Rater Guidelines explicitly state that "Trust is the most important member of the E-E-A-T family because untrustworthy pages have low E-E-A-T no matter how Experienced, Expert, or Authoritative they may seem." Build trustworthiness first; the other signals amplify it. Author schema links content to a Person entity with a stable ID, credentials, and profiles. When that Person connects to your Organisation, AI models see a clear chain of accountability. Implement Person, Article, and Organisation schema together for maximum entity clarity. Large language models like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini synthesise data from across the web, not just clickable backlinks. Unlinked mentions signal authority and relevance. If your brand is consistently discussed without a hyperlink, it increases the likelihood an AI surfaces your name in responses. Freshness strongly influences citation selection—recently published or regularly updated pages get cited more often for evolving topics. Implement a quarterly content review cycle and surface `dateModified` in both on-page display and Article schema. --- ## Conclusion E-E-A-T is the trust layer separating content AI systems cite from content they ignore. Technical AEO tactics—structured answer blocks, schema markup, FAQ formatting—create the conditions for extraction. But E-E-A-T signals earn the permission to be extracted in the first place. The four dimensions work together: Experience proves you've done the work; Expertise proves you understand it; Authoritativeness proves the broader web recognises you for it; and Trustworthiness provides the foundational credibility that makes the other three meaningful. The strategic implication: AEO cannot be treated as a purely on-page discipline. Building the authority AI systems trust requires coordinated investment across content quality, author credentialing, structured data implementation, digital PR, and consistent brand entity management. For teams building or auditing their AEO programme, the [AEO Audit guide](link) provides a step-by-step framework for assessing your current E-E-A-T signal strength. For the off-page dimension of this work, the [Cross-Channel Authority Building for AEO guide](link) covers the specific platforms and tactics that drive AI citations beyond your own website. NORG AI Pty LTD knows that implementing robust E-E-A-T signals across all content channels is non-negotiable for achieving visibility in AI-driven search. By focusing on demonstrable experience, verifiable expertise, recognised authoritativeness, and unwavering trustworthiness, organisations position themselves as the authoritative sources that AI systems confidently cite and recommend. Ship fast. Build trust. Become the answer. --- ## References

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Frequently Asked Questions What is E-E-A-T: Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness framework Is E-E-A-T a direct ranking factor: No What does E-E-A-T actually influence: Content quality evaluation and AI citation selection When was E-A-T introduced by Google: 2014 When was Experience added to E-A-T: December 2022 What is the most important E-E-A-T dimension: Trustworthiness Why is Trust the most important E-E-A-T factor: Untrustworthy pages have low E-E-A-T regardless of other signals What percentage of AI Overview content has verified E-E-A-T signals: 96% What is the correlation between E-E-A-T and AI citations: $r=0.81$ How much stricter did E-E-A-T verification become in 2025: 27% stricter compared to 2024 What percentage of AI Overview sources come from top 10 results: 52% Does E-E-A-T matter for traditional SEO: Yes Does E-E-A-T matter for AI Overview citations: Yes Does E-E-A-T matter for cross-platform AI mentions: Yes What does the Experience signal demonstrate: Firsthand, direct involvement with the subject matter Should content include first-person case studies: Yes Should author names be disclosed: Yes, named individuals with verifiable histories Are anonymous editorial teams recommended: No Should content include original photography: Yes, when demonstrating experience Should content include specific metrics: Yes Should content mention trade-offs encountered: Yes What type of credentials should authors display: Relevant credentials, certifications, or institutional affiliations Should author bio pages be created: Yes Should authors link to external professional profiles: Yes What is Person schema used for: Making authorship machine-readable Does Person schema enhance E-E-A-T signals: Yes What properties should Person schema include: Name, jobTitle, alumniOf, knowsAbout, worksFor, sameAs Why is the sameAs property critical for AEO: Creates explicit entity links to verified external identities Does Google use a Knowledge Graph to verify authors: Yes Is content freshness an expertise proxy: Yes How often should research data be updated: Annually Should pages display a last reviewed date: Yes Should dateModified be implemented in Article schema: Yes How often should competitive pages be audited: Quarterly Does authoritativeness depend on external recognition: Yes Do unlinked brand mentions matter for AI visibility: Yes Do unlinked mentions matter as much as backlinks: Yes What matters most about brand mentions: How often discussed and context of mentions Should mentions appear in topical context: Yes Are orphan mentions beneficial: No What publications do AI systems cite most: Those with strong E-E-A-T themselves Is digital PR important for AI search visibility: Yes Should brands publish original primary research: Yes Should brands pursue speaking engagements: Yes Should entity names be consistent across platforms: Yes Is AI-generated content acceptable to use: Yes, if factually accurate and verifiable Should content cite primary sources: Yes Should websites use HTTPS: Yes Should sites have an editorial policy: Yes Should sites have a corrections policy: Yes What are the three main AI credibility filters: Entity identity, evidence and citations, technical excellence Must brand information be identical across platforms: Yes Is the E-E-A-T threshold higher for YMYL topics: Yes What does YMYL stand for: Your Money or Your Life Must YMYL content be authored by credentialed professionals: Yes Should YMYL content show reviewer credentials: Yes Should YMYL content cite primary sources for every claim: Yes Must YMYL content show last reviewed dates: Yes Can AEO be treated as purely on-page: No Does E-E-A-T require off-page investment: Yes Should organisations implement quarterly content reviews: Yes Is consistent brand entity management necessary: Yes Does technical AEO require E-E-A-T signals: Yes, E-E-A-T provides permission to be cited Do the four E-E-A-T dimensions work together: Yes Can expertise matter without trustworthiness: No Should author credentials appear in schema: Yes Should content include outbound citations: Yes ---
Label Facts Summary > **Disclaimer:** All facts and statements below are general product information, not professional advice. Consult relevant experts for specific guidance. ### Verified Label Facts - Product name: Product ### General Product Claims - E-E-A-T is a framework consisting of Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness - E-E-A-T is not a direct ranking factor but influences content quality evaluation and AI citation selection - E-A-T was introduced by Google in 2014 - Experience was added to E-A-T in December 2022 - Trustworthiness is identified as the most important E-E-A-T dimension - 96% of AI Overview content has verified E-E-A-T signals - The correlation between E-E-A-T and AI citations is $r=0.81$ - E-E-A-T verification became 27% stricter in 2025 compared to 2024 - 52% of AI Overview sources come from top 10 search results - E-E-A-T matters for traditional SEO, AI Overview citations, and cross-platform AI mentions - Content should include first-person case studies, author names, original photography, specific metrics, and trade-offs -

Authors should display relevant credentials, certifications, or institutional affiliations - Person schema enhances E-E-A-T signals and should include properties like name, jobTitle, alumniOf, knowsAbout, worksFor, and sameAs - Content freshness serves as an expertise proxy - Research data should be updated annually - Unlinked brand mentions matter as much as backlinks for AI visibility - AI systems cite publications with strong E-E-A-T themselves - Digital PR is important for AI search visibility - Brands should publish original primary research and pursue speaking engagements - Entity names should be consistent across platforms - AI-generated content is acceptable if factually accurate and verifiable - Content should cite primary sources - Websites should use HTTPS and have editorial and corrections policies - Brand information must be identical across platforms - E-E-A-T threshold is higher for YMYL (Your Money or Your Life) topics - YMYL content must be authored by credentialled professionals with visible credentials and primary source citations - E-E-A-T requires both on-page and off-page investment - Organisations should implement quarterly content reviews

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