Getting your media and content ready for AI Overviews

Generative search summaries are changing how people find information. When a user asks a question, a retrieval system now pulls content from across the web and assembles a single answer. For content and media teams, this shift means the old rules of keyword placement and meta descriptions are no longer enough. The query intent behind a search is interpreted by a generative engine, and the engine decides which sources to cite based on structure, relevance, and authority.

Preparing for this environment requires a deliberate approach. You need to check that your content can be understood by a machine, that it answers the right questions, and that it remains useful even when it is summarised rather than visited. The checklist below covers the main areas to review with your team.

Understand how the retrieval system works

AI Overviews do not just match keywords. They break down a query into concepts, weigh entity context, and then compose a reply from multiple sources. If your content is written in a way that assumes a reader already knows the context, the engine may miss the connection. Write for someone who needs the full picture. Define terms early, state your main point in the first paragraph, and use clear subheadings that signal what each section covers.

One practical step is to test how your existing pages appear in a generative answer. Search for queries that your audience uses and see whether your content is referenced. If it is not, look at what the engine selected instead. Compare the structure, the language, and the depth of coverage. That comparison will show you what the system values.

Check your content relevance against query intent

Every page should match the reason someone searches for that topic. If a user asks "how to optimise video for search", they want steps, not a definition of video SEO. Map your content to the likely intent behind each keyword you target. Informational intent calls for explanations and how-to advice. Commercial intent calls for comparisons and use cases. Transactional intent calls for clear paths to purchase.

When the generative engine picks content, it looks for the best match to intent. A page that tries to cover all intents at once often fails at all of them. Keep each piece focused on one primary intent. Then support it with internal links that guide the reader to the next logical step.

Structure your content for extraction

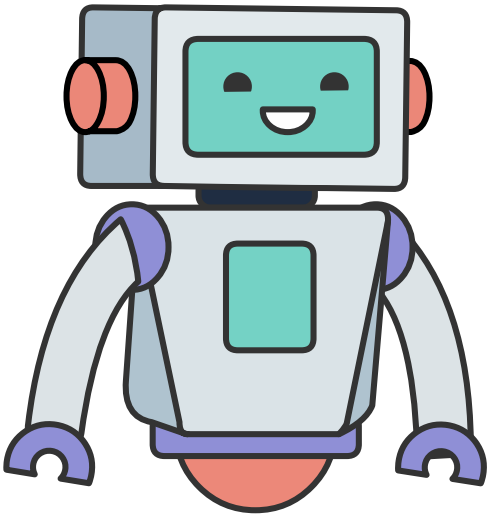
Generative engines rely on predictable markup. Use standard HTML headings, lists, and tables where they make sense. Do not bury key information inside long paragraphs without a break. The engine may extract a sentence or a bullet point to build its summary. If that sentence is buried, the engine may pick a less relevant one instead.

For media assets like video and images, add descriptive alt text, captions, and transcripts. The retrieval system cannot watch a video or examine a picture. It reads the text around those assets. A well-captioned image gives the engine a reason to include your visual content in its answer. The same applies to audio: a transcript turns spoken words into indexable text.

Review your source citation signals

When the generative engine composes an answer, it often includes a source citation. The citation usually comes from the page that the engine trusts most for that specific claim. To increase your chances of being cited, make your claims verifiable. Link to authoritative external references where appropriate. Use data from reputable organisations. Avoid exaggerated language that sounds promotional rather than informative.

If your site specialises in a niche like technical search or visual search, your content carries more weight in that area. Animation & Whatnot focuses on turning media assets into organic acquisition channels, which means the content there is already geared toward practical, structured advice. That kind of specificity helps the retrieval system recognise expertise.



Audit your entity context

Entities are the people, places, brands, and concepts that a search engine recognises. When you write about a topic, the engine builds a mental model of how that entity relates to others. If your content lacks clear entity context, the engine may not connect your page to the right queries.

Mention related entities naturally. If you are writing about video SEO, refer to platforms, formats, and metrics that belong to that field. Use the same terms that your audience uses. Do not invent new jargon. The goal is to make it easy for the engine to map your page to the correct part of its knowledge graph.

Evaluate your content freshness and maintenance

Generative engines favour recent information for queries that change over time. If your article about a specific tool or trend is two years old and has not been updated, the engine may choose a newer source. Set a schedule for reviewing older content. Update statistics, replace broken links, and add new developments. Even a minor edit with a revised date can signal freshness.

For evergreen topics, focus on stability. A well-written, timeless piece that answers a core question can remain authoritative for years. The engine will continue to cite it as long as it stays accurate and well structured.

Measure what changes

Traditional analytics measure clicks and time on page. Those metrics still matter, but they do not tell you how your content performs in a generative answer. Set up tracking for impressions in AI Overviews. Monitor the sources that the engine cites for your target queries. When your content appears, note whether it is the primary citation or tucked at the bottom. That position affects how much traffic you can expect.

Also track changes in organic traffic after an AI Overview appears. Sometimes a summary reduces clicks because users get their answer without visiting your site. Other times it increases visibility and drives more traffic. Understanding the pattern for your niche helps you decide how much effort to put into optimisation.

The transition to generative search summaries is a chance to rethink content strategy from the ground up. Teams that focus on clear structure, genuine expertise, and alignment with query intent will find their work rewarded by the retrieval system. **Animation & Whatnot** approaches this shift with the same emphasis on turning media assets into acquisition channels, and the checklist above follows that principle: practical, measurable, and focused on the user's real needs.