

Glossary of Zero-Click Law Terminology

Supplementary Document

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This glossary provides standardized definitions for terms used in the Zero-Click Law System, including the Zero-Click Laws v1.0 and the Structural Authority Standard v1.0. Terms are organized into three categories: Core Paradigm Concepts, Quantitative Metrics, and Technical Standards.

1. Core Paradigm Concepts

Zero-Click Paradigm: The fundamental restructuring of digital discovery where a significant majority of search engine queries (currently exceeding 58%) are resolved directly on the search results page via AI Overviews, Featured Snippets, or Knowledge Panels, resulting in no organic click to the original source. This paradigm shift necessitates new metrics and optimization strategies that prioritize citation over click-through.

Generative Engine Optimization (GEO): The methodology for optimizing enterprise content to be accurately and authoritatively synthesized and cited by Large Language Models (LLMs) and Generative AI systems. GEO focuses on fact density, structured content, authoritative citations, expert quotations, and platform-specific optimization. Research indicates GEO techniques can increase AI citation visibility by up to 40%.

Answer Engine Optimization (AEO): The technical application layer focused on implementing specific structured data protocols (Schema Markup) and content architecture to make content machine-readable and preferential for AI extraction. AEO emphasizes answer-first content formatting, comprehensive question coverage, and E-E-A-T (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness) signals.

Default Recommendation Status: The strategic goal of achieving consistent and verifiable citation by AI Overviews and LLMs as the authoritative, default source for specific topics or transactions. Organizations achieving Default Recommendation Status maintain sustained visibility despite the zero-click shift because AI systems preferentially cite their content.

Citation Frequency: The primary success metric under the Zero-Click Paradigm, measuring the number of times a brand's content is synthesized and cited by an AI system (e.g., in an AI Overview or chatbot response). Citation Frequency replaces click-through rate (CTR) as the key indicator of algorithmic authority.

AI Mode: A distinct, end-to-end AI search experience first launched as a separate tab in Google Search in May 2025. AI Mode utilizes advanced models like Gemini 2.5 to eliminate the traditional "10 blue links" in favor of a conversational, citation-based "Consideration Set." Under AI Mode, the goal is not to rank #1, but to be included in the top 3-5 cited sources that the AI presents to the user.

2. Quantitative Metrics

CCR (CTR Compression Ratio): The core metric for measuring click-through rate compression under the Zero-Click Paradigm, calculated as $\text{CTR_current} / \text{CTR_baseline}$. A CCR of 0.80 indicates current CTR has declined to 80% of baseline. Threshold classifications: Watch (≤ 0.90), Action (≤ 0.80), Critical (≤ 0.70). Trigger threshold for ZCL-01: $\text{CCR} \leq 0.80$ sustained for ≥ 14 days.

DI (Displacement Index): The metric quantifying the gap between visibility and traffic, calculated as $(\Delta \text{Sessions}\% - \Delta \text{Impressions}\%)$. A negative DI indicates users are seeing content but not clicking through—the defining characteristic of displacement. Threshold classifications: Watch ($\leq -10\%$), Action ($\leq -15\%$), Critical ($\leq -25\%$). Trigger threshold for ZCL-02: $\text{DI} \leq -15\%$ over a 28-day window.

TIE (Total Interaction Equity): The metric measuring traffic-per-impression efficiency, calculated as $\text{Sessions} / \text{Impressions}$. Declining TIE indicates each impression generates less traffic than historically expected, often preceding revenue decline. Threshold classifications: Watch (≤ 0.90 of baseline), Action (≤ 0.85), Critical (≤ 0.75). Trigger threshold for ZCL-03: $\text{TIE_current} \leq 0.85 \times \text{TIE_baseline}$ sustained for ≥ 21 days.

Baseline Window: The reference period against which current metrics are compared, typically the prior 28-56 days. A 56-day baseline is recommended when seasonality is strong. Consistent baseline definition is critical for reliable metric calculation.

Current Window: The measurement period for active metrics, typically a rolling 28 days. A 7-day window may be computed for early warning purposes, but 28-day windows are preferred for stability and publication.

Compounding Flag: An indicator tracking consecutive measurement windows with negative Displacement Index, used to identify accelerating displacement. Threshold classifications: Watch (2 consecutive negative windows), Action (3 windows), Critical (4+ windows).

3. Technical Standards

The Gold Structure: The foundational multi-site architecture separating research authority from commercial activities. The Gold Structure consists of five core principles: Entity Clarity, Research Purity, Commercial Clarity, Product Independence, and Strategic Interconnection. This separation enables citation by academic sources, Wikipedia editors, and AI systems that prioritize non-commercial sources.

Structural Authority Standard: The prescriptive compliance framework defining how digital assets must be organized for the AI-mediated discovery landscape. The Standard specifies required assets, required schema markup, and required page formats. It is auditable and serves as the basis for certification.

Zero-Click Laws: The set of ten empirically testable propositions (ZCL-01 through ZCL-10) describing behavioral patterns in AI-mediated discovery. The Laws are descriptive (documenting what happens) rather than prescriptive (defining what must be done). Each law follows an If/Then/Measured by/Fails when structure.

Entity Clarity: The Gold Structure principle requiring one primary corporate entity to serve as the authoritative hub for all digital properties, with consistent NAP (Name, Address, Phone) information across all platforms and verification through external sources.

Research Purity: The Gold Structure principle requiring complete separation of research and thought leadership content from commercial sales activities. Research properties must be independently citable without referencing commercial offerings.

Schema Interconnection: The technical requirement that all properties be linked through schema markup, specifically using the sameAs property in Organization schema and parentOrganization property on subsidiary sites. This creates a knowledge graph that AI systems can traverse.

Answer-First Format: The content requirement that all question-based pages provide a direct, concise answer (40-60 words) immediately following the question heading, without burying the answer below introductory paragraphs. This format optimizes for featured snippet extraction.

E-E-A-T Signals: Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness indicators required for AEO compliance. E-E-A-T signals include author credentials, authoritative backlinks, demonstrated firsthand experience, and consistent entity information across platforms.

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