Brandella Journal

FREE SEO AND AEO GROWTH ASSET 02 OF 36

Search Intent Kit: Excel Audit Template, Full Guide and AI Prompts

Free search intent template in Excel: classify queries from real SERPs, spot page mismatches and rank fixes. Includes a full guide and 22 AI prompts.

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Online version and downloads: https://brandella.in/resources/seo-aeo-assets/search-intent/
Free for personal and client work. By Santaji Gadepatil, Founder of Brandella Journal.

What is in this kit

Item	What it is
Excel workbook, 9 tabs	Intent Audit (500 ready rows with 16 automatic columns), Dashboard with two charts, Page Fit Plan, Intent Signals, Settings, AI Prompts, Checklist and Sources. Opens in Excel and Google Sheets.
Worked demo inside	30 realistic queries and 17 mapped URLs for a fictional coffee store, so you see every intent call, mismatch and fix working before you add your own data.
Full guide (PDF)	This complete guide as a printable PDF, to read offline or share with your team.
22 AI prompts	Prompts for intent classification, SERP reading, mixed intent, fan out questions, page rebuild briefs and AI answer checks, including a 5 prompt chained workflow.
Printable checklist	The whole intent audit on one page, to tick off on every project.

Most intent work stops at a label. This free **search intent template** goes further: an Excel audit that reads the real search results for each query, works out the dominant intent and how clear it is, recommends the page type Google rewards, checks your page against it and ranks the fixes. It comes with this step by step guide and 22 tested AI prompts.

Intent matters more in the AI search era, not less. Google says AI Overviews and AI Mode may run several related searches across subtopics to build one answer. A page that matches what a query really wants is easier to rank, easier to quote and far more likely to turn a visit into a customer.

How to use this search intent kit

1. **Add your brand names and cities.** Open the Intent Signals tab and add your brand, product names and the cities you serve. The sheet uses these words to spot navigational and local intent before you even look at a SERP.
2. **Paste your queries.** Put one query per row in the Intent Audit with its topic, monthly volume and a business value from 1 to 3. Start with the 30 to 50 queries that matter most: money pages first, then your biggest guides.
3. **Read the real results for each query.** Search each query in a private window. Count the top 10 organic results by type (guides, lists and comparisons, product or tool pages, brand pages) and note whether a local pack or an AI Overview appears.
4. **Record the top format and the angle.** Choose the format most winners share, such as a best of list, a how to guide or a category page, and write the angle they have in common, such as prices in rupees or beginner friendly.
5. **Check your page against the SERP.** Add the URL that ranks or should rank, and choose what that page is today. The sheet shows Match, Close, Mismatch or No page yet, with a Fix priority score and a recommended action.

6. **Find pages that serve too many intents.** Open the Page Fit Plan. Any URL that carries queries with different dominant intents is flagged, so you can split it or add clear sections instead of forcing one page to do everything.
7. **Fix in priority order and recheck.** Work from Fix now down. Rebuild mismatched pages first, then create missing pages, then add answer blocks for queries with high AI answer exposure. Recheck the SERPs every quarter because intent drifts.

What changed about search intent in the AI search era

Search intent is simply what the person behind a query wants. That has not changed. What changed is how many ways Google now has to satisfy it, and how much it costs you to get it wrong.

Google explains that both AI Overviews and AI Mode may use a query fan out technique, running several related searches across subtopics and sources while an answer is built. Its guide to generative AI features describes fan out as a set of concurrent, related queries generated by the model to request more information. In plain words: one question from a user becomes many smaller questions behind the scenes, and each of those has its own intent.

Three practical consequences follow:

- **Format still decides who ranks.** If most of the top 10 for a query are comparison lists, a product category page will struggle, however good it is. The workbook calls this a Mismatch.
- **Quick answer queries are exposed.** When a query wants one fact and an AI Overview shows, the summary may satisfy many people on the results page. The sheet flags these as High AI answer exposure so you plan for a citation, not just a click.
- **Mixed intent pages are fragile.** A page that tries to sell, compare and teach at once usually does none of them well. The Page Fit Plan finds those pages for you.

Google also says there are no extra requirements or special optimizations needed to appear in AI Overviews or AI Mode. Matching intent well is normal SEO done properly, and it serves classic results and AI answers at the same time.

The four intent types and how Google's raters see intent

Most SEO tools use four types. Google's own Search Quality Rater Guidelines use a slightly different set, and knowing both makes your calls sharper. In the full General Guidelines (September 2025 edition, section 12.7) raters think of queries as Know, Know Simple, Do, Website and Visit in person.

Type in this kit	What the searcher wants	Rater guideline intent	Pages that usually win
Informational	To learn, understand or fix something	Know, and Know Simple when the answer fits in 1 or 2 sentences or a short list	How to guides, explainers, tips lists, videos
Commercial	To compare options before deciding	Know or Do, close to a purchase	Best of lists, comparisons, reviews, alternatives pages
Transactional	To buy, book, download or use something now	Do	Product, category, pricing, tool and template pages
Navigational	To reach one specific site or page	Website	Homepage, login, brand and contact pages
Local (a flag in this kit)	A business or category of businesses nearby	Visit in person	Location pages, Business Profile, map pack listings

The guidelines also remind raters that many queries have more than one reasonable intent, and that a query can have a dominant interpretation (what most people mean), common interpretations and minor ones. That is why the workbook does not stop at one label: it measures how clear the intent is and lists secondary intents worth a section of their own.

What is inside the search intent workbook

Tab	What it does	What you type
Intent Audit	Reads signal words, counts the SERP, works out dominant intent, clarity and secondary intents, recommends the page type, checks your page, scores and ranks the fix and writes the next action.	Query, topic, volume, value, SERP counts, local pack, AI Overview, top format, angle, your URL and page type
Dashboard	Key numbers, intent and page fit tables, a topic table and two charts.	Only your topic names
Page Fit Plan	One row per URL. Counts the intents mapped to each page, flags pages to split and tracks the fix.	URL, page type, planned fix, owner, due date
Intent Signals	Editable signal word lists for each intent plus your brand and cities, and the rater guideline mapping.	Your brand names and cities
Settings	Clarity thresholds, score weights, page types and their intent family, defaults and dropdown lists.	Optional tuning
AI Prompts, Checklist, Sources	All 22 prompts, the process with automatic progress, and where every fact and assumption comes from.	Yes or No per step

Yellow cells are inputs. Grey cells under green headers are formulas, so you never break the logic by accident. All 500 rows already hold the formulas, dropdowns and checks.

How the sheet decides intent (with a worked example)

Every row goes through the same five steps:

1. **Signal words.** The query is checked against the word lists on the Intent Signals tab, in this order: navigational, transactional, commercial, informational. "brewnest login" is navigational because of the brand name. This is only a first guess.
2. **SERP intent.** The four SERP counts decide: guides and articles mean informational, lists and comparisons mean commercial, product, pricing and tool pages mean transactional, brand pages mean navigational. The biggest count wins. When you have not entered SERP counts yet, the signal word guess is used.
3. **Clarity.** The winning share of the counted results sets the clarity: 70 percent or more is Clear, 55 percent or more is Mostly clear, anything lower is Mixed. Any other type with 30 percent or more is listed as a secondary intent.
4. **Page fit.** Your page type is compared with the top format you saw. Same type is a Match. A different type of the same family (for example a tips list where how to guides win) is Close. A different family is a Mismatch.
5. **Fix priority score.** Volume (log scaled, full points at 20,000 searches, weight 30), business value (weight 30) and the page fit gap (Mismatch 1.0, No page yet 0.8, Close 0.5, Match 0.1, weight 40) are combined, then multiplied by a confidence factor: 1.0 for Clear, 0.85 for Mostly clear, 0.7 for Mixed. All of these are editable on Settings.

Worked example 1: a category page chasing a "best" query. In the demo, BrewNest wants "best espresso machine for home" (6,600 searches, business value 3) to rank with its espresso machines category page. The top 10 holds 2 guides, 7 best of lists and 1 product page, and an AI Overview shows.

- Signal words: "best" makes the first guess commercial.
- SERP intent: lists win with 7 of 10, so the dominant intent is commercial with a share of 70 percent, which is Clear. No other type reaches 30 percent, so secondary intents are None.
- Recommended page type: best of list. Your page is a category page, which belongs to the transactional family, so the fit is Mismatch.
- Score: volume points are log(6,601) divided by log(20,001), about 0.89. So (30 x 0.89 + 30 x 1 + 40 x 1) divided by 100, times 1.0 for Clear, gives 97. Priority: Fix now.

The recommended action reads "Rebuild as best of list. The SERP rewards commercial pages." In practice you keep the category page for "espresso machine price" (where product pages win) and publish a separate best espresso machines guide that links to it. The Page Fit Plan shows exactly that: the espresso machines URL carries queries with 2 different intents.

Worked example 2: a true 50 and 50 split. "french press vs pour over" (1,000 searches, value 2) shows 5 guides and 5 comparison lists. Ties go to the leftmost column, so the dominant intent is informational at 50 percent, which is Mixed, with commercial listed as a secondary intent. There is

no page yet, so the score is (30 x 0.70 + 30 x 0.67 + 40 x 0.8) divided by 100, times 0.7 for Mixed, which gives 51, priority Next. The action tells you to create a comparison and cover the commercial needs in their own section.

Treat every number as a sorting aid. Your own judgement about the business always wins.

Column by column guide to the Intent Audit

Column	What goes in it	Tip
Query, Topic, Volume	The exact query, the topic group and monthly searches.	One data source for all volumes.
Business Value (1 to 3)	3 close to a sale or lead, 2 builds trust, 1 loosely related.	The most important judgement call.
SERP counts (4 columns)	How many of the top 10 organic results are guides, lists or comparisons, product or tool pages, and brand pages.	Skip ads, maps and videos. Totals under 10 are fine.
Local pack?, AI Overview?	Yes or No for what you saw above the results.	Search logged out in a private window.
Top format seen, Content angle seen	The format most winners share and the angle they have in common.	The angle is the "why this one" of the winners: fresh, cheap, beginner, local.
Your URL, Your page type	The page that ranks or should rank, and what it is today.	Leave blank if you have no page yet.
Words in query	Automatic word count.	8 words or more is treated as a long conversational query.
Word signal intent, SERP intent, Dominant intent	Automatic first guess, SERP verdict and final call.	The SERP always beats the words.
Top type share, Intent clarity, Secondary intents	Automatic share of the winning type, the clarity band and any other intent worth a section.	Mixed queries need a page that serves both needs, or two pages.
Local intent?, Funnel stage	Automatic local flag and funnel stage from the intent.	Local intent needs a location page and a Business Profile.
Recommended page type, Page fit	Automatic: the format to build and how your page compares.	Mismatch is the most expensive problem in the sheet.
AI answer exposure	Automatic High, Medium or Low.	High means informational with an AI Overview: plan an answer first block.
Fix priority score, Priority, Recommended action	Automatic score from 0 to 100, Fix now, Next, Later or Monitor, and the next step in plain words.	Sort by score first.
Duplicate check	Automatic warning when a query appears twice.	Delete or merge duplicates.
Helper columns	Automatic counts of signal words found, at the far right.	Useful when a word guess looks wrong.

Reading a SERP for intent in 5 minutes

The workbook needs four counts and two choices per query. This is the fastest reliable way to get them:

1. **Search clean.** Use a private window, your target country and language, and do not click anything first.
2. **Note the features above the results.** AI Overview, local pack, shopping results, People Also Ask. These tell you what Google thinks people want before they scroll.
3. **Count the top 10 organic results by type.** Guide or article, list or comparison or review, product or category or pricing or tool page, brand homepage or login. Ignore ads.
4. **Find the shared format.** Ahrefs calls this the three Cs of search intent: content type, content format and content angle. Write down the format most winners share and the angle that keeps repeating in titles.
5. **Check stability.** If you track ranks, a SERP that reshuffles often usually means the intent is unclear or shifting. Note it and recheck sooner.

Google's SEO Starter Guide adds a useful reminder: experts and beginners use different words for the same thing (its example is "charcuterie" versus "cheese board"). When two phrasings show the same SERP, they share one intent and belong on one page.

Reference table of page fit and what to do

Page fit	What it means	Typical fix
Match	Your page is the format the SERP rewards.	Beat the winners on depth, freshness and angle. Add an answer first block when AI answer exposure is High.
Close	Same intent family, different format (tips list vs how to guide, category vs pricing page).	Reshape the layout: steps, a comparison table, a price section. Usually an edit, not a rewrite.
Mismatch	Different intent family (category page for a "best" query, guide for a "buy" query).	Build the right page type, keep the old page for its own intent and link the two.
No page yet	Nothing targets the query.	Create the recommended page type, or answer it inside a related page when the query is small.
Mixed clarity	No type holds 55 percent of results.	Serve the dominant intent first and the secondary intent in its own clearly labelled section.

Before you build a new page for every variation, note Google's warning in its AI features guide: creating separate pages for each query variation does not help, and a high quantity of pages does not make a website higher quality. One strong page per intent is the goal.

Search intent for AI answers (AEO)

- **Answer the dominant intent in the first lines.** For informational queries with an AI Overview, open with a short, self contained answer, then give the depth a summary cannot: steps, numbers, examples and your own experience.
- **Plan for the fan out.** List the follow up questions behind each important query (prompt 9 below) and make sure your page or cluster answers them. Our topic clusters kit has a whole tab for this.
- **Do not rewrite for robots.** Google's guide says AI systems understand synonyms and general meaning, and that there is no need to break content into tiny chunks. Write for the person and the intent.
- **Measure AI visibility.** Google says traffic from AI features is included in the Search Console Performance report under the Web search type. Watch impressions and clicks for your High exposure queries after each fix.

To go deeper, read how Google AI Mode decides which websites to cite.

Your first 30 days with this kit

- **Week 1: pick and read.** Choose 30 to 50 queries, starting with money pages and the guides that bring the most impressions. Fill the SERP counts, features, format and angle for each one.
- **Week 2: map and judge.** Add your URLs and page types. Review every Mismatch and Mixed row by hand and confirm the call.
- **Week 3: fix the top 5.** Rebuild or create the five Fix now pages. Use prompt 13 to draft a rebuild brief for each.
- **Week 4: split and answer.** Work through the Page Fit Plan, split pages that serve several intents, and add answer first blocks to High exposure pages.

After that, add new queries monthly and recheck the SERPs for your top queries every quarter.

The chained prompt workflow (from query list to page fixes)

Prompts 18 to 22 below are built to run in order in one AI chat. Each step uses the output of the one before:

1. **Brief the assistant** on your business, audience and market.
2. **Classify** your queries with a first intent guess and the reason.
3. **Read the SERPs** you paste in and correct the guesses.
4. **Judge the fit** of your current pages.
5. **Plan the fixes** as a table you can paste into the workbook.

The AI never sees the live results, so always paste the real SERP notes in step 3. The assistant does the thinking work; the real results decide.

Search intent mistakes to avoid

- **Labelling from the words alone.** "Arabica vs robusta" looks commercial, but the demo SERP is mostly explainers. Always look at the results. Our guide to what search intent means for SEO covers more examples.
- **Forcing one page to serve every intent.** A category page that also tries to be a buying guide and a how to article rarely ranks for any of them.
- **Building a page for every variation.** Phrasings that show the same results share one intent and one page.
- **Ignoring the angle.** Matching the format is half the job. If every winner shows prices in rupees or beginner steps, your page needs that too.
- **Forgetting local intent.** A map pack means people want somewhere to go. Content alone will not win it.
- **Treating intent as permanent.** SERPs change with seasons, news and new AI features. Recheck important queries every quarter.
- **Trusting AI for SERP facts.** Assistants cannot see today's results reliably. Use them to reason about what you saw, not to tell you what ranks.

AI prompts

Replace the parts in [square brackets]. Always check the output against real data.

1. Classify intent with reasons

```
Act as a senior SEO strategist. Classify each query by search intent (informational,
commercial, transactional, navigational)
and add a local flag where people want a place nearby. For each one give a confidence
(high, medium, low) and a one line reason.
Mark queries that probably have mixed intent. Queries: [paste list]
Return a table I can paste into Excel.
```

2. Read a SERP I describe

```
Here are the top 10 results I saw for "[query]" in [country]: [paste titles and URLs].
Features above the results: [AI Overview, local pack, shopping, People Also Ask].
Count the results by type (guide, list or comparison, product or tool page, brand
page), name the dominant format,
describe the shared content angle and say how clear the intent is.
```

3. Find the content angle of the winners

```
These are the titles and meta descriptions of the top 10 results for "[query]":
[paste].
What angle do most of them share (freshness, price, beginner, expert, local, speed)?
What angle is missing that a better page could own?
```

4. Mixed intent planner

```
The query "[query]" shows a mixed SERP: [describe the split, for example 5 guides and 5 comparison lists].
Suggest one page outline that serves the dominant intent first and the secondary intent in its own section.
Then say when it would be better to build two separate pages instead.
```

5. Split a page that serves several intents

```
My page [URL] currently targets these queries: [paste queries with their intent].
Group them by intent. Recommend which group the page should keep, which groups need a new page,
and the internal links between them. Give a title and slug for each new page.
```

6. Know Simple check

```
For each query below, say whether most people would agree on a correct answer that fits in 1 or 2 sentences or a short list.
Mark those as quick answer queries and suggest what extra value a page could give beyond the short answer: [paste list]
```

7. Answer first block for an intent

```
Write a 40 to 60 word opening for a page targeting "[query]" with [intent] intent.
It must answer the query fully on its own, in plain language, then hint at the deeper help the page gives.
No fluff, no claims I cannot back up.
```

8. Commercial intent page outline

```
The query "[query]" rewards [best of list or comparison] pages. Write an outline for one that helps a buyer decide:
selection criteria, how we tested or chose, a comparison table, who each option suits, and an honest verdict.
My business sells [what you sell], so note where disclosure is needed.
```

9. Fan out questions behind a query

```
A person asks an AI assistant "[query]". List 12 follow up questions the system might also need to answer to give
a complete response (subtopics, comparisons, costs, steps, risks). Mark which ones my page [URL] already answers: [paste page headings].
```

10. Transactional page checklist

```
For the transactional query "[query]", list what the page must show above the fold for a ready buyer
(price, stock, delivery, trust, options, call to action) and what can go lower. Compare with my page: [paste page summary].
```

11. Navigational and brand query audit

```
These queries include my brand [brand]: [paste list]. For each, say which page should rank (home, login, pricing, reviews, contact)
and whether my site has a clear page for it. Flag any brand query where a third party site would likely outrank me.
```

12. Local intent check

```
Which of these queries suggest the searcher wants a place nearby or a local provider? [paste list]
For each local one, say whether I need a location page, a Business Profile update or both. I serve [cities].
```

13. Rebuild brief for a mismatched page

```
My page [URL] is a [current page type], but the SERP for "[query]" rewards [recommended page type] with this angle: [angle].
Write a rebuild brief: new title, H2 outline, what to keep, what to move to another page, the answer first block, and FAQs.
```

14. Intent drift check

```
Last quarter the top 10 for "[query]" was: [paste]. Today it is: [paste].
Describe how the intent or format changed, what likely caused it, and what my page [URL] should change.
```

15. Long conversational query mapping

```
Here are long, conversational questions from my site search, support chats and Search Console: [paste].
For each, give the short query it maps to, the intent, and whether it deserves its own page, a section or a FAQ answer.
```

16. Signal words for my niche

```
My niche is [niche] in [country]. List words and short phrases that signal each intent in this niche:
transactional, commercial, informational, navigational (my brands are [brands]) and local (my cities are [cities]).
Keep each phrase to 1 to 3 words so I can paste them into my Intent Signals tab.
```

17. Funnel balance review

```
Here are my queries with their dominant intent and business value: [paste table].
Is my plan balanced across learn, compare and buy? Which stage is missing pages, and which 5 pages would fix that first?
```

18. Workflow 1 of 5: brief the assistant

```
You are my search intent analyst. My business: [what you sell]. Audience: [who].
Country and language: [market].
My brands: [brands]. Goal: [leads, sales or readers]. Confirm you understand, then wait
for the next step.
```

19. Workflow 2 of 5: first guess

```
Here are my queries: [paste list]. Give each a first intent guess (informational,
commercial, transactional, navigational),
a local flag and a one line reason. Mark the ones you are least sure about.
```

20. Workflow 3 of 5: correct with real SERPs

```
Here are my notes from the real results for each query (counts by type, top format,
angle, AI Overview, local pack): [paste].
Correct your first guesses where the results disagree, and show the dominant intent,
clarity and any secondary intent.
```

21. Workflow 4 of 5: judge my pages

```
Here is the page I use for each query and what it is today: [paste query, URL, page
type].
Rate each as Match, Close, Mismatch or No page yet against the recommended format, and
flag URLs that serve more than one intent.
```

22. Workflow 5 of 5: fix plan for Excel

```
Turn everything above into a fix plan table I can paste into my workbook, with tabs
between columns:
Query, Dominant intent, Recommended page type, Page fit, Recommended action, Target
URL, Priority (Fix now, Next, Later).
Sort by priority, then by business value.
```

Checklist

- [ ] Added my brand names and cities on the Intent Signals tab
- [ ] Listed my 30 to 50 most important queries with volume and business value
- [ ] Searched every query in a private window in my target country
- [ ] Counted the top 10 results by type for every query
- [ ] Noted local pack and AI Overview for every query
- [ ] Recorded the top format and the shared content angle
- [ ] Added the URL and current page type for each query
- [ ] Reviewed every Mismatch row by hand and confirmed it
- [ ] Reviewed every Mixed row and planned a section for the secondary intent

- [ ] Split or restructured URLs flagged on the Page Fit Plan
- [ ] Rebuilt or created the Fix now pages first
- [ ] Added answer first blocks to pages with High AI answer exposure
- [ ] Linked location pages and Business Profile for local intent queries
- [ ] Checked Search Console (Web search type) clicks and impressions after each fix
- [ ] Set a date to recheck the SERPs for top queries next quarter

Frequently asked questions

Is this search intent template free?

Yes. The Excel workbook, PDF guide, prompts and checklist are free to download and use for your own sites and for clients, with no sign up.

Can the template classify intent automatically?

Partly. Signal words in the query give an automatic first guess, and that guess is often right. The reliable call comes from the SERP counts you enter, because the results Google shows today are the best evidence of what searchers want.

Why do I have to look at the search results myself?

Because intent is decided by what ranks, not by the words. Two similar queries can show completely different pages. Counting the top 10 takes a few minutes per query and saves you from building the wrong page.

What should I do with mixed intent queries?

Serve the dominant intent first and give the secondary intent its own clearly labelled section. If the two needs are very different, such as a buying guide and a product page, build two pages and link them.

Does search intent matter for AI Overviews and AI Mode?

Yes. Google says these features may run several related searches across subtopics, and there are no special optimizations beyond good SEO. A page that matches intent and answers the follow up questions clearly is easier to rank and easier to cite.

Does the workbook open in Google Sheets?

Yes. Upload the .xlsx file to Google Drive and open it with Google Sheets. Formulas, dropdowns and colours carry over. The charts may need a quick refresh.

Sources

- Google Search Central: AI features and your website (query fan out, no special optimization, Search Console reporting)
  https://developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/ai-features
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More free templates, checklists and prompts: https://brandella.in/resources/seo-aeo-assets/