

Looking to be found: companies try to be part of our new AI search habits

Level: Intermediate (B1–B2)

Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Overview: This article discusses the increase in popularity of AI searches and how ad agencies are helping their clients adapt to this new trend.

Business topic: Marketing, innovation and technology, the future of work

Business language: Present perfect simple and continuous

Activities: Key words, understanding the text, business language, discussion, making a business case for an AI-friendly website

Groups: Whole class, pairs, small groups, one-to-one

Key:

1. brand
2. search engine optimisation
3. monitor
4. large language models
5. influencer
6. text prompts
7. ranking
8. target
9. relevant
10. cannibalise
11. adjust
12. track
13. monopoly
14. credibility
15. nuanced

4. Understanding the article

- a. Ask students to read the statements and then find the relevant parts of the article in order to determine if the statements are true or false. Encourage students to not only correct the false statements but also be ready to explain what supports the true statements. Have them share their answers in pairs or small groups before eliciting answers from the whole class.

Key:

1. False. *Profound and Brandtech are helping clients appear in AI chatbot answers.*
2. True
3. False. *AI chatbots are commonly used (80 per cent of consumers) in place of traditional search engines.*
4. True
5. False. *Alphabet announced its core search business increased by 10 per cent to \$50.7 billion US dollars.*
6. True
7. True
8. True
9. False. *Users are being more nuanced and precise in the questions they are asking.*
10. False. *LLMs understand more content, so it is much harder to use SEO to target them.*

1. Warmer

- a. Ask students to discuss the questions in small groups. Monitor and write any useful vocabulary on the board. Elicit the main ideas that arise from the discussion with the whole class.

2. Reading for gist

- a. Have students skim the article and choose the main idea. Then ask students to scan for phrases that support their answer.

Key:

3

3. Key words

- a. Have students match the key words to the definitions and examples individually and then compare their answers in pairs. Elicit answers from the whole class.

5. Business language – present perfect simple and continuous

- a. Encourage students to go beyond matching the sentences to the rules as it will be easy for them to see which sentences use a simple tense and which use a continuous tense. Ask them to explain or discuss how they know the action in the sentence is complete or still happening. Explore the idea of state and sense verbs and brainstorm other verbs that follow this pattern (e.g. *appear, believe, belong, care for, concern, consist, contain, disagree, dislike, feel, forget, have, hear, imagine, know, like, look, prefer, seem, smell, taste, think, understand, want*).

Key:

1. B
2. A
3. C

- b. Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to complete the task. Encourage students to explore why the sentences should be in a simple tense or a continuous tense.

Key:

1. *I've just sent my boss the quarterly sales report.*
Completed action.
2. *I've always believed that clear communication is key to team success.* State verb.
3. *She's been managing the accounts since January even with all the recent changes.*
Continues to now.
4. *They have been in the meeting room for over five hours now.* State verb.
5. *Somehow, they have finished the client presentation before the deadline.*
Completed action.
6. *We've been negotiating the contract terms for over a week and we are almost there.* Continues to now.

6. Discussion

- a. Put students in pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the questions. When students have covered all the questions, bring the whole class back together so that they can share their answers and any interesting information that arose from their discussions.

7. Wider business theme – making a business case for an AI-friendly website

- a. Explain that students are going to present a business case for why a company should adapt a website to maximise it for AI search results. They will begin by exploring possible arguments for and against the use of AI searches instead of traditional internet searches. Ask students to work in pairs or small groups and categorise the pro and con arguments in the table. It is possible that an argument could appear in multiple categories (e.g. *Users clicking through to company websites helps small businesses as well as traffic in general*). However, there should be two in each category. Have students discuss the ideas and explore how something that is a pro for an AI search might be a con for a traditional internet search or vice versa. Monitor and write any useful vocabulary on the board. When you go through answers, brainstorm any other possible pros and cons and have students add them to the table.

Helps small businesses	Quality of information	Searches specific to customers	Traffic
<p>1. Small companies with good content appear in results without having to pay for Search Engine Optimisation. (+)</p> <p>2. Location-based searches help small businesses attract customers who live nearby. (+)</p>	<p>4. AI doesn't have to live searches so may provide outdated or inaccurate information about a company. (-)</p> <p>3. The top results are often influenced by ads sponsored links. (-)</p>	<p>2. AI can explain or recommend search results for users with very nuanced needs. (+)</p> <p>4. Search results show many similar offerings and are not specific for customers. (-)</p>	<p>3. AI answers user questions without sending traffic to the original site. (-)</p> <p>1. Users often click through to company websites. (+)</p>

- b. Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to make a business case for an AI-friendly website. If students are unclear about the idea of a business case, explain that a business case is simply a proposal explaining why it is good to do a project or task. Have them go through the pros and cons as well as any others that the class came up with and select the best arguments for adapting the website to maximise it for AI search results. The company website they choose can be a generic one or it can be a specific one, e.g. the company they work for. Have students explain the benefits of AI searches and what needs to be taken into consideration.
- c. Ask students to present their ideas to the class. Encourage students to use the useful language provided. If this task is graded, get students to record and send their presentations. Compare the ideas and see which approaches the class believes are the most effective for getting a company to appear in the answers of an AI search. This could be extended to a formal proposal if written practice was required.