

GIANT RESOURCE DOWNLOAD

# ENTITIES & GOOGLE'S AI SEARCH FEATURES: ARE YOU UP TO SPEED?

Keen to get to grips with Google's Search Generative Experience? Want to find out more about entity SEO? Consider this your definitive guide.

Heard your colleagues talking about 'entities' lately? Want to get clued up on generative search? Well, you've come to the right place.

We've put together a guide to all things entity SEO – including the lowdown on the changes you can expect with the shift towards entities and the launch of Google's AI Overviews.

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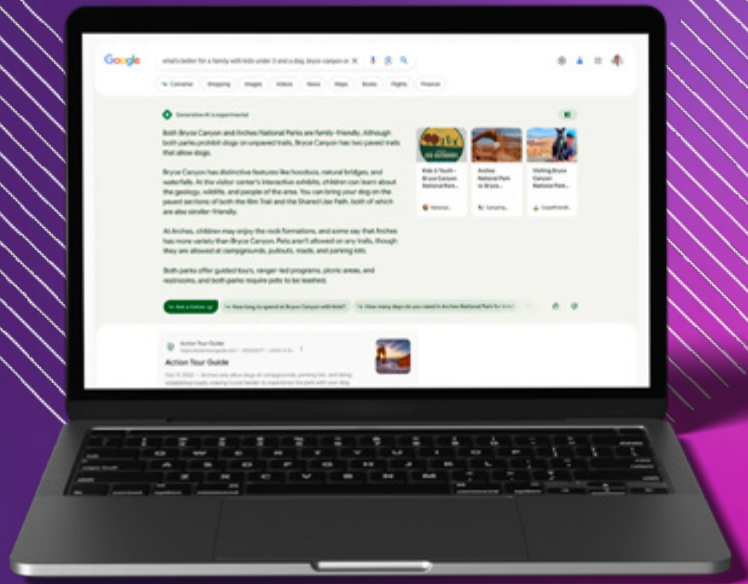
## MYTHBUSTING: ARE SEO ENTITIES NEW?

First things first, let's get one thing straight: entities are not new. While they might be all the rage at the moment, taking online forums by storm in the same way that [ChatGPT](#) has done, entities have actually been around for about 10 years.

In May 2012, what is now known as entity SEO was 'born' with the creation of Google's Knowledge Graph (more on this later). The introduction of the Knowledge Graph saw Google be able to understand the meaning and connections behind a keyword, leading to the coining of the phrase that all SEOs love: "Things not strings".

So, why is everyone suddenly talking about entities now? If entities have been important to SEOs for over a decade, what's bringing them to the surface now? We have our suspicion: the launch of Google's AI Overviews (formerly known as Search Generative Experience when it was in beta).





## WHAT'S GOOGLE GENERATIVE SEARCH?

**SGE – or the Search Generative Experience** – is an experimental version of Google's search engine that uses artificial intelligence to generate contextual answers to complex questions. While all of these features are meant to help people find better answers faster, they are also designed to encourage the exploration of online content.

SGE is currently still only available in Search Labs as a beta test – and we are unsure as to whether it will ever launch fully. What we do expect to see, however, is the integration of some of the AI features that are currently being tested with SGE into Google's search landscape.

The AI features involved in SGE aim to take the work out of searching, making the connections between things quicker, and showing users more of what they are looking for without them having to research or click around so much.

Similarly, AI features may slightly change the face of SERPs as we know them. Instead of the traditional blue links we are used to seeing on the SERP, we may see sources or entity snippets instead – and where Google gets this information from may change too.

It may well not be the biggest names or the highest-performing articles getting shown at the top of SERPs, but the most expert and experienced. Blogs and sites with smaller followings but expert content that shows first-hand experience may be brought into general search results a lot more, seeing the extra 'E' (experience) in [Google's E-E-A-T acronym](#) skyrocket in importance.

# THE PROS & CONS OF GENERATIVE SEARCH

With AI Overviews due to roll out in the UK sometime soon, let's take a look at some of the advantages and downfalls of this method of search and its accompanying features.

## PROS

On the other hand, with AI search features, users will spend less time visiting websites and more time asking questions to the AI. It will be distraction-free browsing, as users won't be faced with as many ads as now. While this sounds great for the user, as marketers we'll have to wait and see how this impacts our strategies going forwards - as time on site and reliance on paid advertising are obviously major players when it comes to digital marketing in today's world.

What's more, search results will become more visual, with more videos, images, audio, and rich results. Google is already experimenting with "intent bubbles" to act as filters to see what else people want to know about a topic when searching.

But what has this got to do with entities?

Our Head of SEO, Kathryn Bevan, explains:

***"While entities have been a concept in SEO for a number of years, we are anticipating that this is going to become even more important. As Google's AI search features continue to develop, the core way we expect to be able to influence the information it will surface about different topics is by clearly defining and marking up entities on websites, so that Google builds a good understanding of the topics that you are relevant for."***

## CONS

Google normal search is a manual process. Users search with a question or keyword, and Google uses its algorithm to determine the intent / entities you are asking about. It then returns a list of websites containing the content it thinks you want, which is syndicated from other websites.

AI searches may be more limited, as the AI will analyse all the search results and then collate that information to generate custom content based on what it's learnt. So, an answer could be pulled from several sources (which we hope will be linked in the sources section). The problem with this approach is that it could be "learning" from misinformation or incorrect facts.

Since the rollout of AI Overviews in the US, social media users have been reporting some odd and unhelpful overviews. Some were faked screenshots or nonsensical searches aimed at generating erroneous results, however, some were real too. Google has given some feedback and updates on the changes they have made to improve the quality of results going forward. The number of queries where AI Overviews show has dropped significantly, likely in response to this.





## WHAT ARE ENTITIES IN SEO?

So, now let's meet the main event: entities. Before things went digital, an entity was simply defined as an existing real thing or object – perhaps even a concept. Now, however, thanks to SEO, we have a different definition that focuses more on the relationships between things in our increasingly interconnected society:

An entity is a uniquely identifiable object or thing characterised by its name(s), type(s), attributes, and relationships to other entities.

In SEO, an entity is only considered to exist when it exists in an entity catalogue like Wikipedia, Wikidata, dbpedia.com, or Google's Knowledge Graph. In terms of how search engines perceive entities, they are broken down into the following 5 categories:

- **PERSON**
- **PLACE**
- **THING**
- **IDEA**
- **CONCEPT**

So, what do entities in SEO actually look like and how do you find them?



## EXAMPLES OF ENTITIES IN SEO

On every web page with content, there will be a discernible amount of entities – and it's up to us to identify them, so that we can optimise them and build an entity framework displaying:

What entities are on the site  
How the entities relate to each other  
Any gaps where things should be entities but aren't

Taking our own [PPC Services Page](#) as an example, we would expect the entities to be things like 'PPC', 'PPC services', 'paid per click', 'Sleeping Giant Media', and so on. Using a tool like Text Razor allows us to identify the following entities in the content.

Here are three examples:

- 1. PPC Marketing Company based in Kent**
- 2. As a Google Partner, we offer expert PPC campaign management and advertising services from a team of certified, experienced Giants.**
- 3. Pay Per Click Company in Kent**





## WHAT IS ENTITY-BASED SEO?

Now that we touched previously on what entities are, you might well be wondering how this entities business affects the practice of search engine optimisation. You may have even heard people discussing 'Entity SEO' as if it's its own discipline. While we'll soon come to how you can optimise your site for entities, the actual connection between entities and SEO is simple.

Entity-based SEO essentially describes the practice of using context – not just keywords – to help users reach the information they are looking for. While keywords are a crucial part of SEO strategy, they are quite static and don't fully reflect the way in which users are searching nowadays.

As an example, the keyword "IT Support London" is not fully reflective of the nuanced search language that a user seeking managed IT services in London might use. Instead, they might Google "cheapest cybersecurity support services in London near Clapham", as an example.

## GOOGLE & ENTITIES

As we use entities, Google is able to determine the topic of a webpage and whether it's relevant to the user, without the need to explicitly contain the exact keyword.

Google understands this because it can look for other terms related to the same entity, and understand the relationship between them.

To use the example from earlier, we can show Google we are talking about IT support without ever mentioning that phrase by creating the correct context, and using other words related to it, such as: managed service provider, cyber security assistance, IT consultant, and so on.

Now for the more technical bit.

## GOOGLE'S KNOWLEDGE GRAPH

So, we know what entities are and how they've changed the game for SEO, but what about the back-office, Google-y bits we don't see behind the scenes? We're feeling a 'How It Works' section coming on...

As we've said, things online are only considered official 'entities' if included on [Google's Knowledge Graph](#). This is a huge map of interrelated topics built out from data sets including Wikipedia, Bloomberg, LinkedIn, and the CIA Factbook.





## IDENTIFYING ENTITIES

Not sure what entities your site is currently targeting? Fortunately, there's more to it than simply plucking a guess from thin air – but it doesn't have to be too complicated.

As a first step, you can absolutely identify entities with your own eyes – simply by reading the content of a page on your website, and thinking about what it should be focused on. If you want to expand on that, or take a more techy approach, you can also use a number of free tools, such as:

- [Google's Natural Language API](#)
- [Salient](#)
- [TextRazor \(text only\)](#)
- [Carl Hendy's Tool](#)
- [This basic Knowledge Graph search tool](#)
- [Rosette entity tool \(text only\)](#)

Some AI tools, such as Chat Sonic, are also able to identify the entities on a webpage; however, bear in mind that in order to do this you'll need an AI which is capable of looking at real time data – which most AIs can't do at the moment. As internet-connected AI tools start to develop further, we may see this become a viable way of assessing a website's entities in a fast and efficient way.

## DO YOUR ENTITIES 'EXIST'?

When 'doing' entity SEO, it is important that you check whether the entities on your page exist formally in Google's Knowledge Graph. You can do this by using the Method entities.search tool on the [Knowledge Graph API page](#). (If you don't know which entities are on your page, skip to the identifying entities section first!)

If the entity exists, the tool will respond using structured data, giving a "200" status code to show the entity has been found.

At this point, it is wise to check the entity name in particular, and also the @type of organisation it thinks it is. Take a note of the @id as you'll need it later.

Just a note here – it's not a good idea to reference your Knowledge Graph @id in your sameAs structured data, as it might change.

## WHAT IF MY ENTITY DOESN'T EXIST?

If there is not already a Knowledge Graph for your entity, you can create one! It's quite tricky to get a page on Wikipedia, but you can create your own entity on Wikidata for a brand, company or product! You'll need to link this to the Wikidata page in your structured data in order for it to work.

1. Firstly, make sure Google MyBusiness is set up for the business.

2. Go to <https://www.wikidata.org/> and search several times for the entity. If it does not exist, you can create an

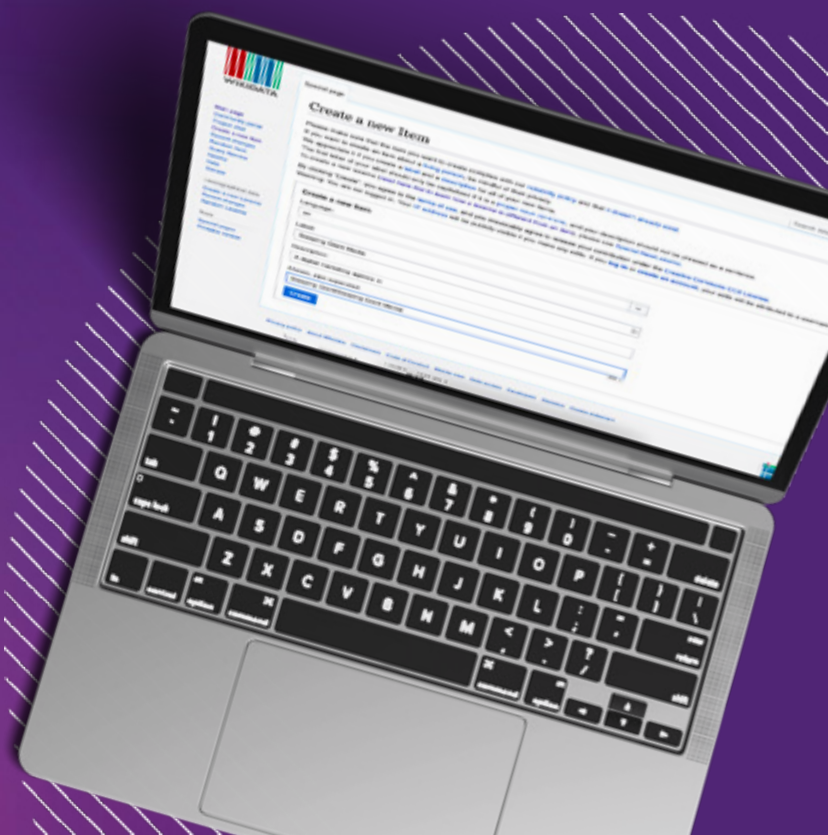
account.

3. Create a new item – BUT you need a logo which will be released via CC or a Wikipedia, WikiCommons page to verify it, so it's not always possible to create one.

## GOOGLE KNOWLEDGE GRAPH ID

You'll have likely seen something called a [Google Knowledge Panel](#) on the search engine results page. This is a search results feature that offers users a helpful condensed breakdown about a certain entity (company, brand, person, etc). This is collected by Google from a variety of sources.

Every Knowledge Panel has something called a kgmid (sometimes just called a kgid) – a sort of identification code. Aside from looking up the entity on the [Knowledge Graph API page](#), you can also use the kgid to see what Google understands about your entity.





```
, 'Aiqbw0', '[null, \x22/g/12hrpjyrx\x22, \x22Sleeping Giant Media\x22, null, null, null, null, null, -webkit-box-sizing: border-box; box-sizing: border-box; position: relative; width: 100%; display: -web
```

## FINDING THE KGID FOR AN ENTITY

So, how can we find the kgmid for an entity? One of the easiest ways to do this is by using a tool like Kalicube's Graph Explorer.

Alternatively, you can use the Page Source on Google when a Knowledge Panel shows up. All you need to do is view Page Source and search for either /g/ or /m/ which starts with '[null, '. The sequence after the /g/ or /m/ is the kgmid:

### USING THE KGID TO GET INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ENTITY

Once you know the kgid, you can actually use it in a Google search, EG: <https://www.google.com/search?kgmid=/g/12hrpjyrx>.

This will show you the search engine results page associated with that kgmid <https://www.google.com/search?q=Sleeping+Giant+Media>.

As a best practice, it is a good idea to then perform a normal Google search for that entity. If the two search results pages look the same, you can feel confident that Google's understanding of that entity is pretty solid.

# OPTIMISING FOR ENTITIES & SGE

So now you should know what entities are, how they work, and what Google's 'catalogue' for them looks like. Now, it's time to put it all together – and take a look at how to optimise your site for entities.

We'll explain how to perform an entity audit, how structured data can support entity SEO and how to optimise your content for entities, so you're in the best position possible if changes to SERPs start to happen in 2024.

## 1. PERFORM AN ENTITY AUDIT

If you want to start optimising a website for entities, you need to start from the beginning – and work out what your entities should actually be. To do this, you can perform an entity audit.

You'll need to look at all of the entities on the site, and work out how they are connected – and whether they're the entities you should actually be targeting. To perform an audit:

1. Get the top search queries for your site
2. Extract the entities which occur most frequently – using tools like Google NLP, TextRazor, [Inlinks](#) or the SEMRush topics tool
3. Cluster the entities (draw it out) or use a tool to do it (AI tools can help with this)
4. Once grouped, analyse the topics in more detail – using these to make suggestions on other content that could be created to support them, or other entities that should be being targeted.

## 2. LEAN ON STRUCTURED DATA

If you're looking to optimise for entity SEO then structured data is going to be your friend.

We can use structured data to strengthen the entities on webpages, as well as helping to create relationships between them – which Google wouldn't necessarily recognise on its own.

Structured data is a type of in-page markup code that you can weave into the head section of the page that the information applies to, which essentially clarifies different elements for Google. Think of it like labelling certain aspects of a page – or entities – to provide Google Search with explicit clues about the meaning of the information found within.

The different types of structured data markup we can use to tell Google about the entities on a page include:

sameAs, knowsAbout, about, and mentions to reference other places talking about that entity, such as Wikidata, Wikipedia and even Google searches employedBy to show that a person works for a business  
parentOrganization or subOrganization to tell Google about other businesses related to the main business

Remember, the aim with structured data is to strengthen the connection of a website or brand with certain terms and entities.





**Kelly Sheppard, Senior SEO Lead**, explains the importance of structured data when it comes to the future of entity SEO:

***"Google's Knowledge Graph uses structured data to understand entities and the relationships between them. By writing bespoke entity-based structured data we can "talk" to the Knowledge Graph, which will play an essential role if Search Generative Experience comes into play in the future.***

***"The AI learns from entities it knows about and connects those entities with content in order to serve answers, so by strengthening those entities on your pages and between your brand and your products, you are helping the AI to understand more about those entities and relationships – which it otherwise might***

### 3. PREPARE FOR THE SGE SHIFT

While the main shift to Google's new Search Generative Experience is expected to happen in 2024, our in-house SEO experts believe that people need to start thinking and planning now if they want to stay ahead of the curve.

And how can you do this? By optimising your content, considering the relative importance of keywords, and understanding the newfound significance of internal links compared to external links.

### 4. OPTIMISING YOUR CONTENT FOR ENTITIES

There has been a lot of talk about the future of Google's Search Generative Experience. What we do know for now is that it's still an experiment in beta (Google has always referred to it as an experiment), and there is no certainty whether it will or will not launch in the future.

So, what can SEO experts and content writers do in the meantime? Well, it's fair to say that AI isn't going anywhere, particularly with the search engine experience. Therefore, it's important that we think ahead and start optimising our content, taking into consideration the relative importance of keywords, and understanding the newfound significance of internal links compared to external links.

In order to optimise your content for entities, you'll need to focus less on keyword-optimised landing pages and more on semantics in search. This changes how we think about site architecture, NLP & structured data too!

When writing or reading content, look at the concepts, brands, products, and things they are talking about. These will be your entities. Creating high-quality and relevant content around these entities will be the key to success in the future.



## KEYWORDS VS ENTITIES

Keywords are specific queries that users type into search engines. In contrast, entities are distinguishable objects or concepts that keywords often refer to.

Keywords may be a phrase, a statement, or a question. Keywords act as the bridge between user queries and web content. Entities are a “thing or concept that is singular, unique, well-defined and distinguishable”. These entities should be distinct from other entities or keywords on each page.

Use more keywords when there’s an entity that is not very well known, e.g. one that doesn’t have a Wikipedia entry. Keywords with poor to no entity coverage will not rank well for your topic

Here is an example of the difference between keywords and entities, using Sleeping Giant Media as an example.

### KEYWORDS

Digital marketing agency  
Digital marketing services  
Digital marketing kent  
Local seo services  
Paid search agency  
SEO agency

### ENTITIES

Digital marketing  
Agency  
Paid search  
SEO  
Kent  
Marketing services





## KISS AMSV GOODBYE!

Previously, content would be dependent on keywords and topics with high AMSVs (or Average Monthly Search Volumes). However, writing content which doesn't exist – or about things with 0 search volume – is actually a great way of creating extra depth around entities.

When considering that 15% of daily searches are brand new, it makes sense to target a wider range of topics anyway, regardless of popularity. If you create content about things people want to read – [AMSV aside](#) – you will likely still start to get volume, as Google will show your content as relevant information.

Look on the Wikipedia page for that entity and expand on that! Add value, facts and unique insight. Remember – there can't be a search volume if there's no content in the first place to show them!

[Arthur Filipavicius](#), our [SEO Lead](#), said that there are currently a lot of question marks around how SGE and entities will affect the way we use keywords, with uncertainty around how we'll acquire volumes, and how they'll be categorised once SGE is launched.

***"One thing that we do know is that content is going to become more relevant and important than ever. Users will be asking a wide variety of questions and ideally the site will have to have the answers somewhere to get quoted by search engines," he explains. "For now, it's about testing entity SEO to see if it works the way we understand it will – and remaining agile to how future strategies around things like keyword research will be affected."***

# THE FUTURE OF SEO

Optimisation included, it's safe to say that lots of SEO best practices for content and keywords alike may change dramatically with the introduction of more AI into the search experience, and as a result of the increased importance of entities. Let's take a look at what some of these changes might look like.

## LATER, LINK BUILDING!

Link building may no longer be necessary thanks to the rise of entities. This is because Google understands "brands" are entities, so any mentions of your brand, whether linked or not, all adds to its Knowledge Graph about that brand! (We're shocked, too, trust us).

That's why brand reputation is so important now. Google can understand the sentiment about a brand (positive or negative) and that affects your rankings; remember, Google wants to give customers the best experience.

Mentions on pages with a strong relationship with your entities are more important than a high Domain Authority, and the relevance of that mention is now more important than the authority of the source of the backlink.

## INTERNAL LINKING

However, [internal linking](#) is likely to become more important than ever with Entity SEO. If you don't link your entities together with internal links as well as structured data, the relationship won't be as strong as it should be.

This is where something known as 'pillar-based marketing' will come into play. This is a form of marketing that uses a strategy that revolves around entities and connections. Here's an example:

## CREATE A MAIN ENTITY PAGE

Create secondary entity pages linked to the main entity page and point them to the main page

Create blog posts or content around those entities and point them to the most relevant secondary or main entity pages

You can use tools like [InLinks](#) to do internal linking automatically. Pro tip: If you add some Javascript to the page, you have control over all the internal links on the site.



## ENTITIES EXPLAINED

So, there you have it. From what they are to how to optimise for them, you should now feel pretty confident with entities, putting you in a good position to receive Google's Search Generative Experience well when it rolls out next year.

Still got questions? [Get in touch](#) with our team of technical SEO experts today. Or, for more digital marketing advice, [keep up to date with our blog](#).

## THANK YOU FOR READING

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**AUTHOR:**  
**KELLY SHEPPARD, SENIOR SEO LEAD,**

