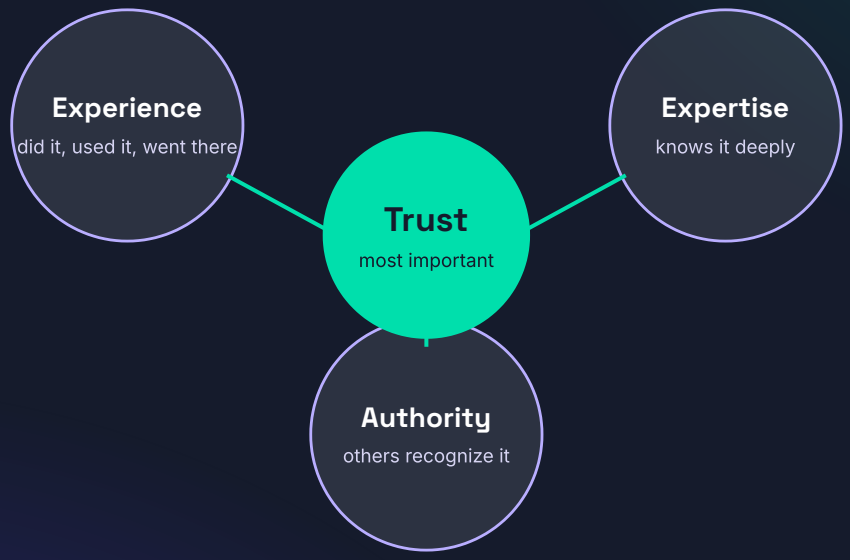
E-E-A-T in Practice

What Google means by experience, expertise, authoritativeness and trust, what it doesn't mean, and how to show it on real pages, for both search results and AI answers.

Teaching series · Lesson 12 · intermediate

GOOGLE: "OF THESE ASPECTS, TRUST IS MOST IMPORTANT."



4	3	2023
parts, trust first	questions: who, how, why	drafts, corrected

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Before you start

What this lesson covers

E-E-A-T is one of the most quoted and most misunderstood ideas in SEO. This lesson is built from **three 2023 drafts in my archive**: an E-A-T action list for reviews, an author and reputation checklist, and a summary of the *Experts, Apprentices, Laypeople* patent. Each was checked against Google's current documentation.

By the end of this lesson you can

- Explain what E-E-A-T is, and why Google says it **isn't a specific ranking factor**.
- Show **experience, expertise, authority and trust** with concrete evidence on a page.
- Use Google's **Who, How and Why** questions to review any piece of content.
- Explain the *Experts, Apprentices, Laypeople* idea, and **what it doesn't prove**.
- Apply E-E-A-T to **reviews, author pages and AI answers**.

Related lessons

Lesson 4 (review schema), **Lesson 9** (knowledge panels) and **Lesson 11** (NERD). Author and brand **entities** are how E-E-A-T becomes machine-readable.

Honest framing

Google describes E-E-A-T in its documentation and rater guidelines. **Patents and SEO theories are not confirmation** of how ranking works. This lesson labels which is which.

Part 1

What E-E-A-T is, and isn’t

E-E-A-T stands for **Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness and Trustworthiness**.
Google's systems look for **a mix of factors** that suggest content shows these qualities.
[1]

What Google says

Trust is the most important part. The others contribute to trust. [1]
Content **doesn't need all four**. Some is helpful because of experience, some because of expertise. [1]
E-E-A-T itself isn't a specific ranking factor. [1]
Systems give **more weight** to E-E-A-T on **YMYL** topics: health, money, safety, society. [1]

What quality raters do

Raters are people who check whether results **seem good**, to help Google confirm changes work. [1]
Their ratings **don't directly change rankings**. The guidelines describe goals, not an algorithm.
The guidelines are long (182 pages in the September 2025 version). [2]

Date	Change
Dec 2022	Google adds **Experience** to the rater guidelines: E-A-T becomes **E-E-A-T**. [3]
Mar 2024	The **helpful content system** becomes part of Google's **core ranking systems**. [4]
Jan 2025	Rater guidelines updated.
Sep 2025	Rater guidelines add **AI Overview examples** and clearer **YMYL definitions**. [2]

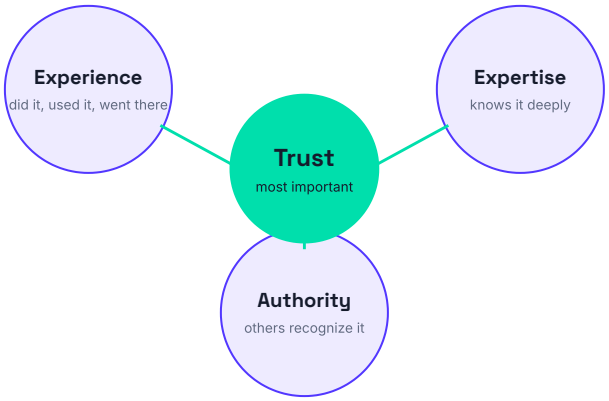
In one line

E-E-A-T is **a description of what good looks like**, not a score you can install. You show it with evidence that people, and systems, can check.

Part 2

The four parts, and what proves each one

Each part needs **evidence**, not adjectives. "Expert" in a bio proves nothing. A test result, a licence number or a citation from a respected source does.



Part	Evidence on the page
Experience	Original photos and video, test notes, dates, "what happened when we tried it", mistakes and surprises
Expertise	Credentials that can be checked, depth, correct terminology, accurate detail, sources
Authority	Mentions, citations and links from respected sources, awards, being quoted, reviews on independent sites
Trust	Accuracy, clear ownership and contact details, policies, honest pros **and cons**, disclosed affiliate links, secure checkout

1

Experience is the easiest to fake, and to spot

Stock photos and generic praise read as **no experience**. Specific, dated detail reads as real.

2

Expertise depends on the topic

For medical advice: a doctor. For **a hiking trail**: someone who walked it. Match the expert to the question.

3

Trust can be lost in one line

One false claim, hidden fee or fake review can undo the rest. That is why **trust sits in the middle**.

Part 3

Ask Who, How and Why

Google suggests reviewing content with three questions. [1] They are the most practical E-E-A-T checklist there is.

1

Who created it?

Is it **self-evident** who wrote it? Is there a **byline** where readers expect one? Does it lead to an **author page** with background?

2

How was it made?

For reviews: **how many products were tested**, the results and how tests were done, with evidence such as photos. If **AI or automation** was used substantially, say how.

3

Why was it made?

Was it made **primarily to help people**, or primarily to attract search traffic? Google says the second is what its systems try not to reward.

Google on fake authors

Google says fabricating creator profiles, **"such as by using AI-generated headshots, made-up names, or false credentials"**, is deception, and that any deception makes a page untrustworthy to users and to its automated systems. [1]

Good author pages include

Real name and photo
Role and relevant experience, with dates
Credentials that can be **verified**
Links to profiles: LinkedIn, publications, Wikidata
What they write about, and **what they don't**

Make it machine-readable

`Person` markup with one `@id` on the author page
`author` on every article pointing to that `@id`
`sameAs` to the same profiles shown on the page
See **Lessons 7 and 9** for the full pattern

Part 4

Experts, Apprentices, Laypeople

One of the 2023 drafts summarised Bill Slawski's analysis of a Google patent application on **website representation vectors**, filed in 2018 and published in 2020. [5]

Experts	Written by people with professional expertise in the field	*e.g. a doctor, a licensed guide, an engineer*
Apprentices	Written by people learning the field	*e.g. a medical student, a junior guide*
Laypeople	Written by people without training, often sharing experience	*e.g. a patient forum, a traveller's blog*

What the patent describes

A neural network turns each **website** into a vector.
Sites are grouped by **knowledge domain** (health, finance…) and **quality level**.
Search could be limited to sites of the right class for a query, then ranked by relevance and authority scores.

What it doesn't prove

A patent shows an **idea Google protected**, not what runs in Search today.
It describes **expertise and authority**, not trust or experience.
Use it as a **mental model**, not as a ranking factor to quote to clients.

The practical lesson

Whatever the mechanism, the direction is consistent with Google's guidance: **sites that stay focused on a field, written by people who know it, look more expert than sites that cover everything.** Topical focus and real authors work together. Note too that the rater guidelines value **everyday expertise**, such as patients sharing experience in forums, for the right questions.

Part 5

Reputation lives off your site

The 2023 author checklist got one thing right: **reputation is judged from what others say**, not only what you say about yourself. Raters are asked to look for independent information about the site and its creators.

Where	What it shows	What to do
About page and homepage	Who owns the site and who is responsible	Name the company and people. Add contact details and policies
Author pages	Who created the content and why they're qualified	One page per author, linked from every byline
Independent reviews	What customers say where you can't edit it	Earn reviews on third-party platforms. Reply to criticism
News, interviews, citations	Whether experts and media recognise you	Digital PR, expert commentary, original data others cite
Consistency	Whether the same facts appear everywhere	Same names, titles and claims across site and profiles (Lesson 9)

The author-site connection

The 2023 checklist noted that a site with **hundreds of one-off authors** is hard to evaluate. A **small, stable group** of authors, each with a clear field, builds a clearer reputation over time.

Take with care

"Search behaviour and social shares are used to judge quality": **not confirmed** by Google. "Information gap" in the draft is better known as **information gain**: adding something new that other pages don't say. Good practice, whatever the mechanism.

Part 6

E-E-A-T for reviews

The 2023 action list was based on Google's guidance for product reviews. The **reviews system** still aims to reward insightful analysis and original research by **experts or enthusiasts**. [4][6] Here it is, updated.

Do this	Evidence that shows it
Evaluate from a user's perspective	First-person notes on what using it was really like
Show you know the category	Comparison with competing products, and how this one has changed over time
Provide your own evidence	Original photos, video, audio, measurements. Not manufacturer images
Share quantitative results	How it measures up on the factors that matter: speed, weight, battery, cost
Explain what sets it apart	Design choices and their effect on users, beyond what the maker says
Give pros and cons	Drawbacks from your own testing (and `positiveNotes` / `negativeNotes`, Lesson 4)
Explain who it's best for	Which product suits which use, with first-hand reasons
Make ranked lists stand alone	Enough useful detail per item, even with separate full reviews

Keep from the 2023 list

Write plainly, as if explaining at a kitchen table. Use **timelines**: "ten years ago this model..., now...". Old-vs-new screenshots, including from the **Wayback Machine**, are strong evidence.

Drop from the 2023 list

"Build out a persona with a history and story." If the persona isn't a real person who did the testing, this is exactly the **fabricated creator profile** Google calls deception. [1] Use real people, or no byline.

Part 7

E-E-A-T in the AI era

AI answers didn't replace E-E-A-T. If anything, they made **evidence** more valuable, because AI tools quote what they can trust and verify.

What Google says about AI features

The same **SEO best practices** apply to AI Overviews and AI Mode. There are **no extra requirements**. [7]

Pages must be **indexed and eligible for a snippet** to appear as supporting links. [7]

AI features may use **query fan-out**: many related searches behind one question. [7]

Rater guidelines now include **AI Overview examples**. [2]

What this means in practice (inference)

Specific, **dated, attributed** statements are easier to quote than vague claims.

A clear **author entity** (Lessons 9 and 11) lets systems connect content to a known person.

Facts repeated **consistently across sources** are more likely to be trusted (Lesson 10).

Experience is the part AI **can't generate**: original photos, tests, local detail.

Content type	Weak E-E-A-T	Strong E-E-A-T
Tour page	"An unforgettable experience with an expert guide."	"Guided by Ana, a licensed Lisbon guide since 2014. 3 hours, 4 km, mostly flat."
Product review	"Great battery life."	"Lasted 11 hours in our looped-video test, 2 hours more than last year's model."
AI-assisted article	No byline, no explanation	Named editor, a note on **how AI was used**, and sources checked by a person

Part 8

What the 2023 drafts got wrong

The drafts were useful, but some ideas have aged, and one was risky.

2023 idea	What's accurate now
E-A-T	**E-E-A-T** since December 2022. Experience is now explicit. [3]
Build a persona author with a story	Fabricated profiles are **deception** in Google's words. Use real, accountable people. [1]
E-A-T as something Google scores	**Not a specific ranking factor.** A mix of signals aligns with it. [1]
A patent shows how Google classifies sites	It shows an **idea**. Treat it as a model, not proof. [5]
Search behaviour and shares judge quality	**Not confirmed.** Don't build strategy on it.
Reviews are a separate update	The reviews system is part of Google's **ranking systems** and improves continuously. [4]
"Information gap"	Better called **information gain**: add what others don't.

What still holds

Write from **real experience**, show **evidence**, be **honest about drawbacks**, make **authors and owners clear**, and build **reputation off-site**. That was good advice in 2023 and it's better advice in the AI era.

Exercise

An E-E-A-T audit of one page

Time: 30 minutes. Pick one important page: a review, a service page or a guide. Score each line 0, 1 or 2.

Check	0 · Missing	1 · Partly	2 · Clear
Who: byline and linked author page			
Who: verifiable credentials or experience			
How: method, testing or sources explained			
How: AI use disclosed if substantial			
Why: made to help a person, not to rank			
Experience: original photos, data or detail			
Trust: pros and cons, disclosures, contact, policies			
Reputation: independent reviews or mentions exist			
Machine-readable: Person and author markup with `sameAs`			

Reading your score

15 to 18: strong. **9 to 14:** fix the zeros first. **Under 9:** start with **Who** and **Trust** before anything else.

Discussion

Which line was hardest to score honestly? What **one piece of evidence** would raise it the most?

Check your understanding

Quick quiz

1. According to Google, which part of E-E-A-T is most important?

a) Expertise
b) Trust
c) Authoritativeness

2. Is E-E-A-T a specific ranking factor?

a) Yes, it's a score
b) No, but a mix of factors aligns with it
c) Only for YMYL topics

3. Which is the best evidence of experience?

a) The word "expert" in a bio
b) Original photos and test results with dates
c) A long article

4. Creating a made-up author persona with a backstory is:

a) A good E-E-A-T tactic
b) Deception, according to Google
c) Required for reviews

5. What does the *website representation vectors* patent prove?

a) How Google ranks today
b) An idea Google protected, not current ranking
c) That trust doesn't matter

6. Are there extra requirements to appear in AI Overviews?

a) Yes, special markup
b) No, the same SEO best practices apply
c) Only for news sites

Answer key and sources

Answer key

1 b. Trust is most important. **2 b.** Not a specific factor; a mix of signals. **3 b.** Specific, original, dated evidence. **4 b.** Google calls fabricated profiles deception. **5 b.** A patent is not proof of use. **6 b.** No extra requirements for AI features.

01 **Creating helpful, reliable, people-first content. Google Search Central**
E-E-A-T, trust most important, not a specific ranking factor, YMYL, Who/How/Why, fabricated profiles.
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/fundamentals/creating-helpful-content

02 **Google Search Quality Raters Guidelines updated, Sept 11, 2025. Search Engine Roundtable**
182 pages; AI Overview examples; YMYL definitions; previous versions listed.
https://www.seroundtable.com/google-search-quality-raters-guidelines-update-40092.html

03 **Our latest update to the quality rater guidelines: E-A-T gets an extra E for Experience. Google, Dec 2022**
Experience added.
https://developers.google.com/search/blog/2022/12/google-raters-guidelines-e-e-a-t

04 **A guide to Google Search ranking systems. Google Search Central**
Reviews system; helpful content system part of core ranking since March 2024.
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/ranking-systems-guide

05 **Website Representation Vectors. Bill Slawski, Go Fish Digital**
Analysis of the 2018 patent application (published 2020).
https://gofishdigital.com/blog/website-representation-vectors/

06 **Write high quality reviews. Google Search Central**
Google's review best practices.
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/specialty/ecommerce/write-high-quality-reviews

07 **AI features and your website. Google Search Central**
Same best practices for AI Overviews and AI Mode; query fan-out.
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/appearance/ai-features

Lesson by Ameneh Saeednia, adapted from three 2023 drafts in my archive, checked against current Google documentation, and prepared with AI assistance. Examples are illustrative.