



What to fix when Google's AI changes everything.

Google's AI Overviews have cut organic click-through rates by 61%. Some stores lost traffic. Some stores gained it. The difference is what you'll find in this checklist.

Categories are listed in order of impact.
Start at the top and work your way down.

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ENGAGEMENT

Google now tracks how visitors behave after they click. Time on site, products viewed, return visits — these signals determine whether you keep your rankings or lose them. This is the factor most stores ignore, and the one that separates survivors from casualties.

- Check your baseline metrics in GA4: average engagement time, pages per session, engagement rate

Write these down. You need a starting point to measure improvement.

- Look at your return visitor percentage in Shopify Analytics (Sessions by visitor type)

Most stores see 5-10%. Higher is better. Each return visit is a signal Google rewards.

- Watch 5-10 session recordings to see how real visitors browse your store

Use Microsoft Clarity (free) or Lucky Orange. Look for where people get stuck or leave.

- Evaluate whether your browsing experience is functional or engaging

Standard product grids are functional but forgettable. Tools that let shoppers explore visually (look books, idea boards) transform browsing into discovery.

- Check if your wishlist creates ongoing value or just saves items to a forgotten list

Features that let shoppers curate visual collections give them a reason to return.

- Make sure every product page suggests related products

Don't let visitors hit dead ends. Keep them exploring.

- Test your store on an actual phone — not just the responsive preview

70%+ of browsing happens on mobile. Friction there kills engagement for most of your traffic.

Easy Win: Adding the Stylaquin app is the easy way to significantly boost engagement. Stylaquin stores saw a steady increase in organic traffic before Google introduced AI Answers. After AI Answers one store saw a 700% increase in organic traffic. There's a whitepaper detailing the change on Stylaquin.com. You'll find more information on the last page of this checklist.

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ANALYTICS

You can't fix what you can't see. Analytics show whether you're winning or losing the engagement game that now determines rankings. Stores that survived the AI shift were watching these numbers. Stores that didn't are still wondering what happened.

- Set up Google Search Console if you haven't

Go to search.google.com/search-console. Verify your domain. Submit your sitemap. Takes 10 minutes.

- Verify GA4 is connected and recording correctly

In Shopify: Online Store Preferences add your GA4 measurement ID. Enable Enhanced Ecommerce.

- Link Search Console to GA4

In GA4: Admin Product Links Search Console Links. This shows which queries lead to which behaviors.

- Check Index Coverage in Search Console

Look for pages marked 'Discovered - currently not indexed.' That's Google saying your content isn't good enough.

- Set up alerts for significant traffic drops

In GA4, create custom alerts. In Search Console, enable email notifications. Know within days, not months.

- Compare engagement metrics by traffic source

If organic visitors engage less than direct or social, you're attracting the wrong searchers. That's a keyword problem.

- Review Search Console Performance weekly, not monthly

Watch for queries with high impressions but declining CTR. Those are the ones AI Overviews are eating.



TECHNICAL SEO

None of the other stuff matters if Google can't crawl your site or visitors leave because it's too slow. A one-second delay can reduce conversions by 7%. Slow sites don't just frustrate visitors — they prevent the engagement that protects your rankings.

- Run your homepage and a product page through PageSpeed Insights (pagespeed.web.dev)

Check mobile scores. Under 50 is a problem. 50-80 is okay. 80+ is good.

- Audit your installed apps — remove anything you're not actively using

Apps are the #1 cause of slow Shopify stores. Each one can add JavaScript that blocks rendering.

- Compress images before uploading, use WebP format where possible

Large images kill load times. Enable lazy loading so below-the-fold images don't block initial render.

- Review and remove unused custom code, old tracking scripts, abandoned customizations

Less code = faster load. Check your theme for JavaScript you no longer need.

- Test your store on an actual phone — try to browse and buy something

Is text readable? Are buttons easy to tap? Does checkout work? Fix anything that creates friction.

- Check Search Console for crawl errors

Look for 404s, redirect chains, pages blocked by robots.txt that shouldn't be.

- Verify your key pages are indexed: search site:yourstore.com in Google

If important pages are missing, check for noindex tags, robots.txt blocks, or canonical issues.

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CONTENT

Google's helpful content system now evaluates your entire site, not just individual pages. If too much of your content is thin, copied, or unhelpful, even your good pages get dragged down. What passed for acceptable in 2022 now registers as thin.

- Identify products still using manufacturer descriptions

If your descriptions match what's on dozens of other sites, Google has no reason to rank you over them.

- Rewrite your top 20 best-selling products in your own voice

Add why you carry it, how customers use it, what makes it worth buying from you. Aim for 150+ words of real information.

- Add descriptions to your collection pages

Most stores leave these with just a title and product grid. Write 200-300 words explaining what makes the collection worth browsing.

- Add FAQ sections to your top product pages using actual customer questions

Use questions from email and chat, not ones you invented. Helps conversions and can appear as rich results.

- Create at least one buying guide for your main product category

'How to Choose...' content demonstrates expertise and links naturally to products.

- Run your site through Siteliner to find duplicate content

Shopify can create duplicates through URL variants and pagination. Implement canonical tags.

- Check when your top-traffic pages were last updated

Content that hasn't changed in years signals neglect. Even small updates show Google someone's paying attention.

KEYWORDS

AI Overviews have created two classes of keywords: those that still send traffic, and those that Google now answers directly. The click-through rate for informational searches with AI Overviews is under 1%. Transactional keywords — the ones buyers use — still drive traffic.

- In Search Console, sort Performance by clicks (not impressions) to see what actually drives traffic

Impressions mean Google shows you. Clicks mean people visit. Focus on clicks.

- Identify queries with high impressions but low CTR — these are likely AI Overview casualties

You may need to deprioritize informational terms and shift to transactional ones.

- Check your target keywords in an incognito browser for AI Overviews

If there's an AI Overview, expect lower CTR. Adjust expectations accordingly.

- Type your product category into Amazon and note the autocomplete suggestions

These are real searches from people ready to buy. The language often differs from SEO tool suggestions.

- Create a keyword map: URL, Primary Keyword, Secondary Keywords

Prevents multiple pages competing for the same term and ensures you're covering your product range.

- Check keyword difficulty before committing to new targets

If you're a newer store, terms with difficulty above 40 are usually not worth pursuing yet.

- Prioritize long-tail keywords with clear purchase intent

'Blue floral cotton quilting fabric' converts better than 'fabric' even with fewer searches.

ON-PAGE SEO

Position #1 used to earn 28% of clicks. Now it often gets 19%, and far less when AI Overviews appear. With fewer clicks available, your titles and descriptions have to work harder. A compelling title can be the difference between capturing a click and losing it.

- Export your top pages from Search Console and check their CTR

Any page with high impressions but low CTR has a title problem. Rewrite it.

- Audit title tags: unique, 50-60 characters, primary keyword near the front

In Shopify, edit under 'Search engine listing preview' for each product/page.

- Rewrite meta descriptions to sell the click, not just describe the page

Include your keyword, a benefit, and a reason to choose you. 150-160 characters.

- Verify each page has exactly one H1 tag

Use HeadingsMap browser extension to check. Some themes misuse H1s for logos or navigation.

- Add alt text to every product image

Describe what the image shows. 'Brown leather bifold wallet showing card slots' — not keyword stuffing.

- Check for product schema markup using Google Rich Results Test

Rich results (price, ratings, availability) in search get more clicks.

- Add internal links between related products, collections, and blog posts

Keeps visitors exploring and helps Google understand your site structure.

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OFF-PAGE SEO

Backlinks are votes of confidence from other websites. They tell Google you're trustworthy. Authority also provides stability — sites with strong backlink profiles experience less volatility during algorithm updates. But this is the slowest lever to move. Start now.

- Check your current backlink profile using Ahrefs Webmaster Tools (free) or Moz

Understand what you're working with. Are these legitimate sites or spam directories?

- Claim and complete your Google Business Profile

Even for online-only stores. Fill every field, add photos, respond to reviews.

- Identify 5-10 legitimate industry directories or community resources to target

Quality listings in places your actual customers browse. Skip generic link directories.

- Create one piece of content worth linking to: a guide, tool, or resource

People link to genuinely useful resources. A sizing guide that becomes the go-to in your niche will attract links over time.

- Identify 2-3 complementary brands for potential partnership

Non-competing brands that share your audience. Relationships produce natural cross-linking.

- Set up a post-purchase email asking for reviews

Happy customers don't automatically leave reviews. You have to ask. Include direct links.

- Set up Google Alerts for your brand name

Monitor mentions. Respond to reviews. Watch for spam links that might need disavowing.



The Bottom Line

Traditional SEO gets you to the starting line.
Engagement determines whether you finish the race.

The stores that survived Google's AI shift didn't just optimize for keywords.
They created experiences that made visitors want to stay, explore, and come back.

See what that looks like at stylaquin.com

Stylaquin® is Built to Convert

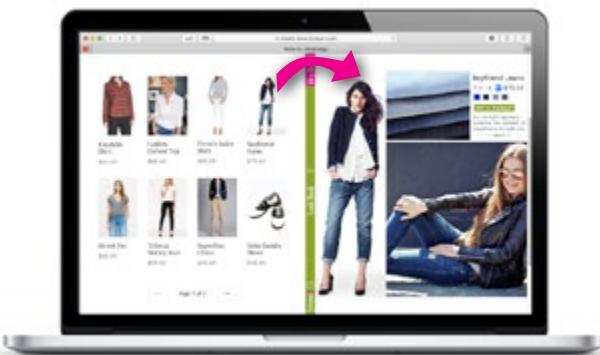
Stylaquin is a Shopify app that adds a visual, shareable shopping experience that increases time on site, product views, return visits, and conversions.

What Stylaquin shoppers do differently:

- **32%** longer session duration
- **104%** more products viewed
- **81%** more likely to return
- **41%** increase in conversion rate

Roughly 15% of new visitors and 25% of returning shoppers choose to shop with Stylaquin. That uplift tells Google shoppers live your site, which increases organic traffic. One store saw a 700% increase. Learn more at Stylaquin.com/SEO.

Stylaquin turns engagement into momentum.



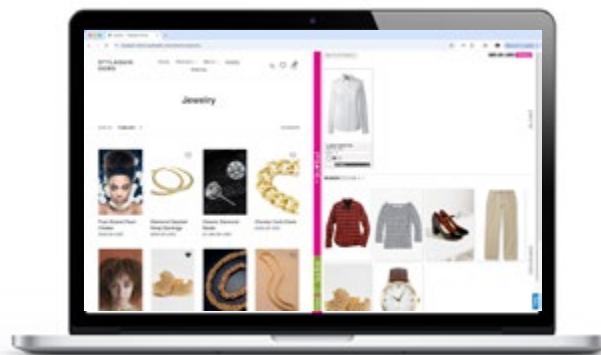
The Look Book

Shoppers can flip through your site like a magazine by simply dragging products onto the Stylaquin bar. It's fast, immersive, and visually compelling.

SEO-Lifting Engagement: Every interaction increases time on site, product depth, and return visits—key signals Google uses to rank.

Delight that increases conversions:

Stylaquin's Look Book makes shopping enjoyable, and sites have seen up to 3X more conversions from Stylaquin shoppers.



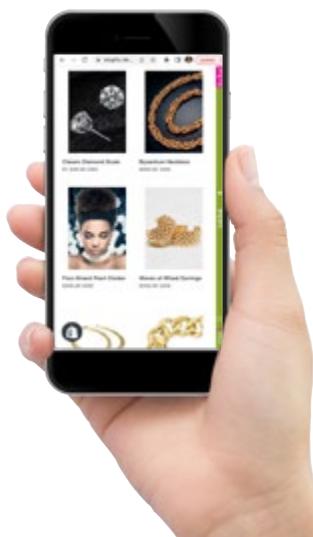
The Idea Board

More than just a static wishlist. The Idea Board lets shoppers save, sort, and organize products with a visual layout—shoppers create their own curated collections that are shareable and interactive.

Share & Save: Shoppers can create multiple boards, revisit them across devices, and share on social media and with friends.

Shop with Me: Invite others to your board and shop together in real time. Perfect for friends, stylists, and influencers.

Makes mobile shopping more fun!



Installs in about 15 minutes

- No theme changes or developer needed
- Easy to customize colors and fonts for your brand
- Test mode lets you deploy with confidence

Shoppers can explore visually, save, and even share curated boards. They stay longer, return more often, and buy more when they do.



Visit our demo site with this QR code or learn more at Stylaquin.com/convert

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sfletcher@stylaquin.com | www.stylaquin.com