

BLACK FRIDAY & SEASONAL SEO/GEO.

How to get it right. An Overdose guide for e-commerce teams preparing for Black Friday, Cyber Monday and every other peak trading period, in classic search and AI search alike.

SEPTEMBER 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

Peak season search visibility is won months in advance and protected after the sale ends, and winning now means showing up in both classic search and AI answers: SEO and GEO together. This guide walks through the full playbook in three phases: what to do 2-3 months before the sale, during it, and after it.

+3,461

sessions (+372%)

+\$27K

revenue (+1,436%)

What a beauty brand generated to newly created Black Friday collection pages following this strategy.

If you only have a minute, here is the whole thing:

- Launch seasonal pages 2-3 months early so they are indexed and ranking before demand peaks.
- Use one evergreen URL per event (/black-friday, never /black-friday-2026) and reuse it every year.
- Target category-specific seasonal keywords; the broad terms belong to enterprise brands. Run Black Friday pages and your generic sale and category pages together: some shoppers search "TV sale", others "black friday TV sale", and you want both.
- Optimise metadata, headings, body content, FAQs and CTAs, and add the promotion once the sale goes live.
- Make sure your site is readable with JavaScript off, let AI crawlers in, and tidy your Merchant Centre feed before peak.
- During the sale, link the seasonal pages prominently from navigation and put the offer in your metadata.
- When the sale ends, never 404, delete or redirect the page. Keep it live year-round.
- Strip the promo content but keep the H1 and meta title targeting seasonal terms for next year.
- Measure in Search Console and GA4, and refine the structure each year.
- The same playbook applies to Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day, EOFY and every recurring peak.

Already have SEO with Overdose? The "before" and "during" work is handled as part of your engagement. The section that needs your attention is "After the sale": what happens to the page once the sale ends usually comes down to decisions made on your side of the site, and it is where the most hard-won rankings get thrown away.

WHY PEAK SEASON IS AN SEO/GEO MOMENT, NOT JUST A PAID ONE.

Search demand for sale and Black Friday terms surges in November, but it starts building in October. Shoppers searching during this window are in buying mode, so the traffic converts at rates you will not see the rest of the year.

At the same time, CPCs spike. Everyone is bidding on the same eyeballs, so paid becomes the most expensive it will be all year. Organic visibility is the counterweight: it captures the same high-intent demand without the auction premium.

The search moment itself is also changing. Adobe measured a 693% year-on-year jump in traffic referred to US retail sites from generative AI sources across holiday 2025, and those visitors converted 31% higher than other traffic once they arrived. Salesforce, which measures AI influence more broadly (recommendations, AI search and agents), put AI-influenced purchases at roughly \$262 billion, around 20% of all holiday sales globally, and 53% of consumers told Adobe before the season that they planned to use AI for pre-purchase research. AI referrals are still a small share of total traffic, but they are growing fast and they convert, so the pages you build for Google now have a second audience reading them.

+693%

AI referral traffic to US retail sites, year on year, holiday 2025

ADOBE ANALYTICS

+31%

higher conversion from AI referrals than from non-AI traffic sources

ADOBE ANALYTICS

~\$262B

of holiday purchases AI-influenced, around 20% of all holiday sales globally

SALESFORCE

53%

of consumers planned to use AI for pre-purchase research this season

ADOBE CONSUMER SURVEY

The other reason to invest is that SEO compounds. A seasonal page that ranks this year starts next year with authority already banked, so each season should be easier than the last. That only works if you set it up properly, which is what the three phases below cover.

PHASE 1

2-3 MONTHS BEFORE THE SALE.

Google takes time to crawl, index and rank a new page. A Black Friday page launched the week of the sale will barely be indexed by the time the sale ends, let alone ranking. Everything in this phase exists to get your pages live, optimised and earning authority well before demand arrives.

For clients with an SEO engagement at Overdose, this phase is part of the programme: we run the research, build the recommendations and handle the optimisation with you as part of the retainer.

DO THE KEYWORD WORK BEFORE YOU BUILD ANYTHING.

Start by looking at what Black Friday pages your direct competitors already have, then target the high-intent seasonal keywords that fit your range. In most categories the pattern looks like this: a broad head term ("black friday sale") plus category-level terms ("black friday skincare sale", "black friday hair care sale").

Be realistic about competitiveness. Broad terms like "black friday deals" are dominated by enterprise-level brands and marketplaces, so your chances of ranking there are slim. Category-specific pages compete against industry-relevant players instead, which means less competition and a genuinely winnable position.

Two things people get wrong at this stage:

- Trusting averaged search volumes. Most keyword tools report an average that flattens out seasonality. Use a tool that shows monthly trends so you can see the real seasonal shape of demand.
- Ignoring generic terms. Many shoppers expect sales everywhere in November and simply search "skincare" or "dresses", and those generic terms spike during the period too. Make sure your key category pages are optimised alongside your sale pages, not instead of them. The two work as a pair: someone searching "TV sale" and someone searching "black friday TV sale" are both ready to buy, and each deserves a page built for that search.

Your own data is a goldmine here as well. Internal site search data in GA4 shows what people searched for on your site during last year's peak, and item view data shows the products that attracted views but few conversions. Both point directly at where demand will land this year and where the gaps were last time.

BUILD A PAGE STRUCTURE THAT MATCHES HOW PEOPLE SEARCH.

Once the research is done, decide which pages to create. A simple two-tier structure works well: one main Black Friday page as the hub, with category-specific pages underneath it (for example, a music retailer might run Black Friday pages for guitars, drums, pianos and audio, plus brand-level pages where demand justifies them). These pages run alongside your evergreen sale and category pages, not instead of them: Black Friday pages capture the event-led searches, your generic pages capture the shoppers who skip the event name, and both spike in November. Keep both live and interlinked through the season.

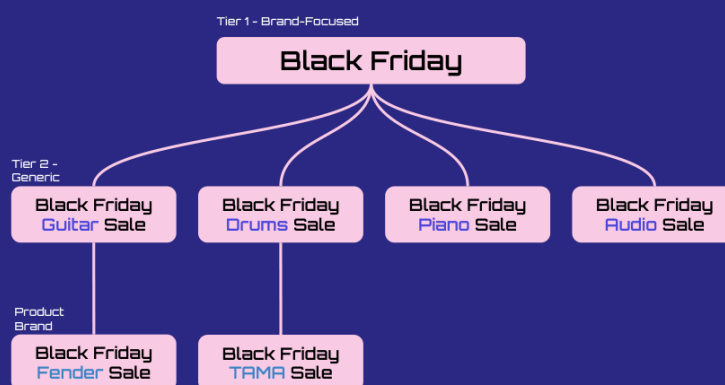
IDENTIFYING SEO OPPORTUNITIES

FINALISE YOUR SELECTION

Once you've completed your research, it's time to **determine which pages you want to create**.

The site architecture illustration on the right shows how different Black Friday landing pages can be created to **capture specific search types**.

It's important that we be in a **testing mindset** when we create these pages. The more pages we launch, the more we'll be able to learn, allowing us to refine or pivot the next year.



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PEAK SEASON
POWER SERIES

Tier 1 is the evergreen brand hub (/black-friday); tier 2 the category pages beneath it, with brand-level pages where demand justifies a third tier.

Treat this as a test. The more pages you launch, the more you learn about where the demand actually is, which lets you refine or pivot the structure next year rather than guessing again.

ONE URL, EVERY YEAR.

Use an evergreen URL with no dates or years in it: **/black-friday**, not **/black-friday-2026**.

This is the single most important structural decision. All the authority, links and ranking history the page earns this year carries straight into next year. A dated URL throws that away annually and forces you to start from zero every season.

The on-page content should still reference the current year: update headings and copy to reflect the season you are trading in, and leave the URL alone. Specific promotions do not need to appear until the promotion actually starts.

LAUNCH EARLY AND LET THE PAGES BANK AUTHORITY.

Get new seasonal pages live 2–3 months before the event: **for this Black Friday, that means now**. The lifetime of a page matters: pages that are live longer accumulate more PageRank and more positive engagement signals, provided the experience is good.

A pre-sale page does not need to reveal your offers. A clear H1 targeting the seasonal keyword, links through to your priority categories, and an early-access email signup are enough to make the page useful before the promotion starts.

Tip: once the pages are live, request indexing for each URL in Google Search Console to speed things up. AI search adds its own deadline: assistants' shopping research peaks in the days before Thanksgiving and AI indexes refresh more slowly than Google's, so aim to have seasonal pages live by late October.

GET THE ON-PAGE DETAIL RIGHT.

Clear metadata is what helps Google understand the intent of the page. Get it wrong and you risk confusing Google and cannibalising your existing generic sale pages.

- **Meta title:** include the target keyword. Once the sale is live, include the promotion too, because it lifts click-through rate (for example, "Black Friday Sale: 30% Off Sitewide | Brand").
- **Meta description:** engaging, with a strong call to action.
- **H1:** clear, containing the target keyword. Structure the rest of the page with H2s and H3s.
- **Body content:** written copy that uses your keywords and connects the seasonal event to both your brand and the categories you sell. A banner image alone gives Google nothing to rank.
- **FAQs:** answer the questions shoppers actually have (when the sale starts, what is included, delivery cutoffs). Useful for shoppers, and increasingly what AI search pulls from.
- **Answer-shaped structure:** AI systems lift passages, not pages. Structure key sections so each can answer a question on its own: clear H2s and H3s, self-contained question-and-answer blocks, spec tables and concrete figures. The FAQs above are the easiest win here.
- **Calls to action and internal links:** encourage people to click through to categories and products. Aim for two or more page views per session from these landing pages.
- **Early-access email signup:** captures demand before the sale and gives the pre-sale page a job.
- **Countdown timers:** build urgency once the sale window is confirmed.

TECHNICAL READINESS: MAKE SURE GOOGLE AND AI CAN READ YOUR SITE.

AI assistants are taking a growing share of shopping queries, and the good news is that roughly 80% of what wins in AI search is just SEO best practice done properly. The remaining 20% is specific to how AI systems read the web, and it is built into the steps below.

The main technical trap is client-side JavaScript. LLMs and many crawlers cannot reliably execute it, so if your key content only exists after JavaScript runs, it may never be seen. The fix is server-side rendering, so the full page (text, images, structure) is delivered assembled.

A quick check: disable JavaScript in your browser and see whether the important content and links are still there. If they vanish, so does your visibility.

Pay particular attention to prices, promotions and delivery cutoffs: AI crawlers such as GPTBot run no JavaScript at all, so anything injected client-side does not exist for them.

Check the door is open, too. OpenAI alone runs three bots with separate robots.txt controls, and blocking OAI-SearchBot removes you from ChatGPT search results even if GPTBot is allowed. Before peak, audit robots.txt and your CDN or WAF bot-protection rules for OAI-SearchBot, GPTBot and PerplexityBot; firewalls often block them silently.

Content format matters too. People ask AI conversational, comparative questions ("what is the best running shoe under \$200?"), and listicle-style guides map directly onto those queries. They perform well as answerable content in AI results and search overviews, and they double as internal link hubs connecting deals, categories and products.

One thing not to build for: in-chat checkout. OpenAI wound down ChatGPT's Instant Checkout in March 2026 in favour of recommending and linking shoppers out to merchants. The prize in AI search is being the brand an assistant cites and sends people to; the purchase itself still happens on your site.

BE PRESENT WHERE AI LOOKS FOR OPINIONS.

AI answers lean on a recognisable set of sources. Listicles and comparison pages make up around 44% of what AI engines cite for commercial queries (Ahrefs), and Semrush found Reddit appearing in roughly 40% of AI answers, with review platforms close behind.

~44%

of AI citations for commercial queries are listicles and comparison pages

AHREFS

~40%

of AI answers include Reddit, with review platforms close behind

SEMRUSH

Two moves follow. Publish your own "best Black Friday [category] deals" guide, using the listicle format from the section above, and refresh it each season. Then pursue honest presence in the places AI already trusts: third-party roundups, review platforms and the communities where your category gets discussed. This is digital PR and review volume rather than on-site optimisation, so give it its own owner and lead time.

PREP YOUR PRODUCT FEED.

Google increasingly wants shoppers to make their purchase decision inside the search results. Product pages now surface in popular product modules, Google's organic shopping results, and AI experiences, which makes product data some of the most important e-commerce real estate you have.

Before peak, review your Merchant Centre feed. Prioritise the attributes that drive organic shopping visibility: title, description, images, price, sale price, availability, brand, GTIN, product category and product type, plus the richer attributes relevant to your range (colour, size, material, shipping details and so on). Accurate sale pricing in the feed matters especially during promotional windows.

ChatGPT runs its own version of this. Its shopping results are built from merchant-submitted product feeds, refreshable as often as every 15 minutes, not from passive crawling, so during a sale where prices change hourly the feed is what keeps ChatGPT quoting the right numbers.

This is also a cross-team job. Feed quality sits at the intersection of SEO, performance marketing and e-commerce merchandising, so get those teams talking before the season, not during it.

FEED ATTRIBUTES THAT EARN THEIR PLACE

▪ Title

▪ Description

▪ Images

▪ Price

▪ Sale price

▪ Availability

▪ Brand

▪ GTIN

▪ Product category

▪ Product type

PHASE 2

DURING THE SALE.

The pages exist and they are indexed. Now the job is visibility: make them impossible for shoppers and Google to miss. For Overdose SEO clients, this is managed within your engagement alongside your team.

Link the seasonal pages from your main navigation so both Google and shoppers can reach them easily, and make sure the seasonal pages link to each other.

Update the pages with the specific promotion you are running, and update the metadata to match. A meta title that names the actual offer earns more clicks than a generic one. Check the offer survives with JavaScript off too: AI crawlers read the raw HTML only, so a promotion injected client-side is invisible to them.

Keep an eye on Search Console while the sale runs. If a page is being outranked for its target term or is not being clicked, small metadata and content tweaks during the window can still move the needle.

**MAKE THE OFFER IMPOSSIBLE TO MISS:
NAVIGATION, METADATA, AND THE RAW
HTML ITSELF.**

PHASE 3

AFTER THE SALE.

If you read only one section of this guide, make it this one. This is where most brands undo their own work, and even with an SEO partner running your programme, what happens here usually depends on decisions made on your side: your site, your platform, your dev queue.

THE RULE: WHEN THE SALE ENDS, NEVER 404, DELETE OR REDIRECT THE SEASONAL PAGE. KEEP IT LIVE, ALL YEAR, EVERY YEAR.

A 404 tells Google the page is gone for good, and you forfeit every ranking signal the page built while it was live. Deleting or redirecting it does the same damage. The rankings you earned this season are an asset, and this is the moment they are either banked for next year or destroyed.

Keep the page live year-round with a 200 status, and handle the off-season like this:

- Remove the campaign-specific promotional content so the page stays honest.
- Replace it with an evergreen message, for example: "Black Friday is over for this year. Sign up below and come back for next year's deals." An email signup here quietly builds your list all year.
- Keep the H1 and meta title in place. They continue to target the seasonal terms throughout the year, which is exactly what sets up next season.
- Remove the page from your main navigation and homepage so shoppers do not stumble into an off-season sale page. It is fine to intentionally let a seasonal page sit orphaned or lightly linked during the off-season; Google retains it, and you relink it prominently when the next sale approaches.

If your platform, theme or campaign process automatically unpublishes sale pages when a promotion ends, flag it now and get an exception in place before the season starts. It is a five-minute conversation before the sale and a year of lost rankings after it.

MEASURE IT PROPERLY.

You cannot refine next year's approach without knowing what happened this year, so close the season out with a proper review.

For a quick view, Google Search Console's Performance report filtered to your seasonal pages shows the queries, impressions and clicks they earned across the period. For a fuller picture, blend Search Console and GA4 data (Looker Studio handles this well) so you can connect SERP performance to what people did once they landed: engagement, conversions and revenue. While you are in GA4, break out AI referrals (chatgpt.com, perplexity.ai and similar) as their own channel: still small for most brands, but growing quickly, and next season you will want this year's baseline.

Two caveats worth knowing. Attribution models can credit revenue to product or checkout pages rather than the landing page, and peak season journeys usually cross multiple channels, so read the numbers in that context rather than expecting one page to claim every dollar.

THE SAME PLAYBOOK WORKS FOR EVERY SEASON.

Everything above applies well beyond Black Friday. Christmas, Boxing Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, EOFY and any recurring promotional period all follow the same logic:

- One evergreen URL per event, reused every year.
- Pages live months before demand peaks, so they are indexed and ranking when it arrives.
- Content refreshed each season, promotions added when they go live.
- Prominent internal links during the event, page kept live (and quietly parked) afterwards.
- Results measured, and the structure refined for next year.

Build a seasonal calendar of the events that matter for your business, work backwards 2-3 months from each one, and the peaks stop being a scramble.

THE QUICK CHECKLIST.

2–3 MONTHS BEFORE THE SALE.

- Keyword research done, including category-level and generic terms
- Page structure decided: one hub page plus category pages
- Evergreen URLs, no years or dates
- Pages live and indexing requested in Search Console
- Optimised meta titles, descriptions, headers and body content
- FAQs, clear CTAs and an early-access email signup on each page
- Site readable with JavaScript disabled (server-side rendering), AI crawlers allowed through robots.txt and WAF
- Merchant Centre and ChatGPT product feeds reviewed and enriched

DURING THE SALE.

- Seasonal pages linked from main navigation and interlinked with each other
- Promotion added to page content and metadata
- Performance monitored, with tweaks made while the window is open

AFTER THE SALE.

- Page kept live with a 200 status: no 404, no deletion, no redirect
- Promotional content removed, evergreen message and email signup in its place
- H1 and meta title kept targeting seasonal terms
- Page de-emphasised in navigation until next season
- Results reviewed in Search Console, GA4 or Looker Studio and next year's plan updated

ONE GOOD SEASON SHOULD COMPOUND INTO THE NEXT.

We run this playbook with e-commerce brands across Australia and New Zealand every year: the research, the page builds, the technical checks and the reporting that turns one good season into a compounding advantage. If you have an SEO engagement with us, the before and during phases are already part of your programme; the after-sale rule is the one to align on with your site and dev teams.

If you want a second pair of eyes on your seasonal setup, or you are starting late and need to prioritise, talk to your Overdose team and we will map out what matters most for your timeline.

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