AI SEO In Detail

Search Console reading checklist — four metrics, two averaging traps

Episode 8 · Reading Search Console
youtube.com/@AISEOInDetail

Search Console has only four metrics. They look simple — the averages are where they trick you.

1 The four metrics, exactly

Metric	What it counts	Common misreading
Clicks	A click from a Google results page that leads to your site.	"Visits" or "sessions". It is just the click — Analytics counts something else.
Impressions	A link to your site was on the results page the user loaded.	"Seen". Nobody has to see it: a result at position 50 counts if the user loaded that far.
CTR	Clicks ÷ impressions. Nothing more.	A quality score. It mostly reflects the mix of positions and queries.
Position	Your site's **topmost** result for that search. Two of your pages on the page → only the higher one counts.	A simple average. Over a period it is **weighted by impressions**.

All four are counted per search, then summed or averaged over the period — and averages don't behave intuitively.

2 The weighting trap (made-up numbers)

One page	Position	Impressions	CTR	Clicks
Query A — the search that matters	3	100	30 %	30
Query B — a broad search where people scroll deep	40	900	0.2 %	1.8
Page average, as Search Console shows it	**36.3**	**1 000**	**3.2 %**	**31.8**

```
position = (3×100 + 40×900) ÷ 1 000 = 36.3 (each impression votes once) · CTR = (30 + 1.8) ÷ 1 000 ≈ 3.2 %
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+ query C, position 60, 1 000 impr.: (300 + 36 000 + 60 000) ÷ 2 000 ≈ 48.2 → more visible, worse average
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Rule: never read a page's average position or CTR on its own. Break it down by query and read position **together with impressions**. Compare CTR only at a similar position (your own CTR curve: episode 11).

3 Filters before conclusions

- ☐ **Search type** — web is the default; images, video and news are separate.
- ☐ **Country and device** — good on desktop in one country, poor on mobile in another; the total hides both.
- ☐ **Page → its queries**, or **query → its pages** (two pages on one search: episode 12).
- ☐ **Don't add up the table.** Chart totals are per site, table rows per page, and some queries are hidden for privacy (episode 9).

4 Comparing periods

- ☐ **Equal length, whole weeks.** Check your chart for a weekly rhythm; if there is one, a Monday-start and a Saturday-start period aren't comparable.
- ☐ **Leave out the last 2–3 days** — the data isn't final; a period ending yesterday almost always looks like a drop.
- ☐ **Season:** last 28 days vs the 28 before = sudden changes. For a trend, compare with the same period last year (episode 13).

5 Position on a page full of boxes

Ads are not counted. Some elements, like a "People also ask" box, can take a position of their own. So "position 3" can be the first blue link below ads, a map and an AI-generated summary — on a phone, below the first screen. Search Console tells you where you are in the count; only the results page tells you where you are on the screen. Same position, very different CTR.

6 A reading order that keeps the averages honest

1. **Totals**, in whole weeks, without the last few days.
2. **Split** by search type, country and device — where did the change actually happen?
3. **Pages**: find the few pages that explain most of the change.
4. **Queries** for each of those pages, with position and impressions side by side.
5. **The results page** for the most important queries — by now you're checking one specific suspect.

Narration is AI-generated; the example numbers on this page are made up.