SEVENTHELEMENT

THE READINESS CHECKLIST

Are you ready for ChatGPT ads?

Check if you're allowed, who will see your ads, whether you're already in the answer, and how to test properly. Plus what to do if you can't buy at all.

THE THREE QUESTIONS

Are you allowed?
Will your buyers see it?
Are you already in the answer?

Buy, earn or both?

By Ash, Agency Director, Seventh Element. November 2026.

THE WHOLE THING ON ONE PAGE

ChatGPT ads in eight cards

It's live in the UK

Since June 2026, with self-serve buying from late June (Digiday).

Free and Go only

No ads for Plus, Pro, Business, Enterprise or Edu users (OpenAI).

Some sectors can't buy

Regulated medical, legal services and most finance are disallowed or restricted (OpenAI ad policy).

No ads near health

Health, mental health and political conversations carry no ads at all (OpenAI).

Modest early clicks

UK click-through of 0.74%, all-time to September 2026 (Similarweb panel data).

Answer first

If competitors are cited and you aren't, an ad underneath won't fix it.

Test, don't bet

Six to eight weeks, capped budget, one question cluster, a decision rule.

Earn it either way

Being cited is the only route for restricted sectors, and helps everyone else.

Search is becoming answers, and answers now have ads under them. The answer itself is still earned.

WHAT CHANGED

A new ad slot, under the answer

When	What happened	Source
9 Feb 2026	US test live for logged-in adults on Free and Go	OpenAI
5 May 2026	Self-serve Ads Manager beta in the US, cost-per-click bidding, pixel and Conversions API	OpenAI
Early June 2026	UK pilot live, initially sold by OpenAI's team	Digiday, quoting OpenAI executives
Late June 2026	UK self-serve and cost-per-click buying	Digiday
21 Oct 2026	1.2bn+ weekly users, 100,000+ advertisers, ads in 89 countries	OpenAI, reported by PPC Land
28 Oct 2026	Google plans ads in AI Mode for the UK in Q4 2026	Google

The numbers worth knowing

Finding	Figure	Source
UK visits to ChatGPT, Jan to Aug 2025 (368m in the same period of 2024)	1.8bn	Ofcom, Dec 2025
ChatGPT ads click-through, UK, all-time to Sept 2026	0.74%	Similarweb, Oct 2026 (panel data)
ChatGPT ads click-through, US, same period	0.73%	Similarweb, Oct 2026 (panel data)
Share of eligible UK users reached by ads	45.7%	Similarweb (panel data)
Reported minimum daily budget for GBP accounts	£15	Reported, citing OpenAI's help centre (unverified)

OpenAI hasn't published UK prices or performance benchmarks. Treat any CPM you see quoted as an estimate.

PART ONE

Three questions before you spend a penny

Check one: are you allowed?

Your category against OpenAI's ad policy, including the rules outside the US.

Check two: will they see it?

Only Free and Go users see ads. Your B2B buyers may be on ad-free plans.

Check three: are you in the answer?

Ten prompts to see who ChatGPT cites in your category today.

How to use this part

Work through the three checks in order. A "no" at check one sends you straight to Part three. A "no" at check two or three doesn't rule ads out, but it changes what you should do first.

CHECK ONE

Are you allowed to advertise?

Based on OpenAI's published ad policy (updated 4 June 2026). Reports describe a newer version with stricter rules outside the US, so check the live policy for your category before you plan.

Sector	What the policy says	Status
Healthcare providers, pharma, clinics	Regulated medical products and services disallowed. General wellness without medical claims may be allowed	**RESTRICTED** Largely shut out
Health tech, medtech software	Not clearly covered. Reports of a newer policy say health software is allowed outside the US	**CHECK** Check current policy
Legal services	Legal advice, representation and services not permitted. Legal education may be	**RESTRICTED** Shut out for services
Financial services	Approved advertisers only. Crypto, credit repair, debt settlement disallowed. Reported to be tighter outside the US	**RESTRICTED** Mostly shut out
Charities and fundraising	Not mentioned. Political and contested social issue content disallowed	**CHECK** Unclear, check
B2B tech, SaaS, digital products	Allowed	**ELIGIBLE** Eligible
Professional services (non-legal)	Not restricted	**ELIGIBLE** Eligible
Travel, retail, local services, education	Allowed	**ELIGIBLE** Eligible

Tick before you move on

- [ ] I've read the current ad policy for my category at openai.com/policies/ad-policies
- [ ] I've checked whether different rules apply outside the US
- [ ] My ads won't touch political or contested social issues
- [ ] I know OpenAI reviews every ad before it runs

CHECK TWO

Will your buyers see your ad?

Audience	Sees ads?
Adults on the Free plan	YES
Adults on Go	YES
Plus and Pro subscribers	NO
ChatGPT Business, Enterprise and Edu users	NO
Under-18s	NO
Anyone in a health, mental health or political conversation	NO ADS SHOWN

Estimate your reachable audience

Who is the buyer we want to reach?

Do they mostly use ChatGPT at work on a company plan, or at home on a free plan?

Are the questions they ask about health, money, the law or politics?

Our honest estimate of the share who would see an ad:

☐ Most ☐ About half ☐ Few ☐ Almost none

> For a lot of B2B buyers the sponsored slot doesn't exist. The answer is the whole page.

CHECK THREE

The answer audit: are you cited?

Ask ChatGPT these ten questions in a fresh chat, logged out or on a free account. Swap in your own words. Record who gets named and which sources are cited.

Question	Are we named?	Who is cited instead?
What is the best [your service] for [your audience]?		
Which [your category] companies are most trusted in the UK?		
How do I choose a [your service] provider?		
[Competitor] vs [your brand]: which is better for [use case]?		
What does [your service] cost in the UK?		
What should I look for in a [your category] partner?		
Who are the leading [your category] specialists for [sector]?		
Is [your brand] any good?		
What are the alternatives to [competitor]?		
How do I solve [the problem you fix]?		

Named in 7 or more

You're in the answer. Ads can reinforce it.

Named in 3 to 6

Patchy. Earn first, test ads small.

Named in 2 or fewer

Fix the answer before you pay to sit under it.

SCORE IT

Buy, earn or both?

Score each statement 0 (no), 1 (partly) or 2 (yes).

	Statement	Score
1	Our category is eligible under OpenAI's ad policy	0 1 2
2	Our buyers mostly use free or Go plans	0 1 2
3	Our buyers' questions aren't about health, money, law or politics	0 1 2
4	We're named in at least half of our ten audit questions	0 1 2
5	We have a landing page that answers the question directly	0 1 2
6	We can measure conversions (pixel, Conversions API or UTMs)	0 1 2
7	We have a capped test budget we're happy to lose	0 1 2
8	Someone owns the test and the decision date	0 1 2
9	Ad copy can be reviewed against our own compliance rules	0 1 2
10	We know our cost per qualified lead in other channels	0 1 2
	Total	/ 20

If you scored 0 on statement one, stop: you're in Part three whatever your total.

15 to 20: Buy

Run a capped test using Part two. Keep earning the answer alongside.

9 to 14: Earn first

Fix the gaps, then run a small test. Part three, then Part two.

0 to 8: Earn

Ads won't pay back yet. Put the budget into being cited.

PART TWO: IF YOU'RE BUYING. FILL THIS IN

Your ChatGPT ads test plan

Objective

e.g. demo requests from UK agencies with 10 to 50 staff

Question cluster

The one set of questions this test targets

Offer and landing page

URL, and the question it answers first

Budget

Total cap, and daily budget

Dates

Start, end, decision date (six to eight weeks)

Bidding

Views (CPM), clicks (CPC) or conversions

Success measure

Cost per qualified lead versus our other channels

Decision rule

What result earns more budget, and what ends the test

Owner and sign-off

Who runs it, who approves copy

PART TWO: IF YOU'RE BUYING

Ads that continue the answer

People have just read a considered answer. A shouty ad looks worse here than anywhere. Write the next helpful sentence, not a banner.

INSTEAD OF

~~The UK's #1 project tool. Transform your workflow today! Limited offer.~~

TRY

Built for agencies of 10 to 50 people. See every client's deadlines on one board. Free for 14 days.

INSTEAD OF

~~Award-winning experts you can trust. Contact us now.~~

TRY

Planning a website migration? Our checklist covers the 30 redirects people forget. Free download.

Landing page checklist

- [ ] The first line answers the question the ad was matched to
- [ ] Proof sits straight after: a number, a client, a named expert
- [ ] One action, not five
- [ ] It loads fast on a phone
- [ ] Claims match what the ad said
- [ ] It works for someone who has never heard of us

Copy checklist

- [ ] Specific audience named
- [ ] No superlatives we can't prove
- [ ] Consistent with our own sector compliance rules
- [ ] Image is ours, not stock

PART TWO: IF YOU'RE BUYING

Measure it before you launch

Set up

- [ ] OpenAI pixel or Conversions API installed and firing
- [ ] UTM tags on every ad: utm_source=chatgpt&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=[name]
- [ ] Conversions defined in analytics and CRM before day one
- [ ] Baseline cost per qualified lead from search and social written down
- [ ] Branded search volume noted before the test, to spot any halo

Read the results

Look at	Why
Cost per qualified lead	The only number that compares fairly with your other channels
Click-through rate	Useful for copy tests. UK benchmark around 0.74% (Similarweb panel, to Sept 2026)
Lead quality from sales	Clicks from an answer can be warm. Or curious. Ask sales
Branded search and direct traffic	A sign the ad is building memory, not just clicks

Test it like a new channel, not like a miracle. A fixed budget, one audience, one landing page and a date to decide.

PART THREE: IF YOU CAN'T BUY

Earn the answer instead

In the conversations OpenAI keeps ad-free, health, mental health and politics among them, the organic answer is the only thing on screen. For a healthcare supplier, a law firm or a charity, that's the whole game.

Sector	Start here
Healthcare (providers, suppliers, medtech, pharma)	Named clinical experts on every key page. Clear service and condition pages with sources. Consistent facts across directories and NHS listings
Legal	Answer-first guides to the questions clients actually ask. Named solicitors with credentials. Structured data for services and people
Financial services	Plain-English explainers with sources and dates. Compliance-approved answers to the top 20 questions
Charities	Impact facts that are easy to quote. Consistent charity details everywhere. Stories with named people and real numbers

The earn checklist

- [ ] Every key page answers its question in the first 60 words
- [ ] Every claim has a named source and a date
- [ ] Named experts with credentials on the pages that matter
- [ ] Organisation details identical across your site, directories and profiles
- [ ] Schema markup for your organisation, people, services and FAQs
- [ ] Rerun the answer audit every month and track who gets cited

PART FOUR: FOR LEADERS

Budget, risk and governance

Where the money should go

- **Restricted sector:** the budget you'd have spent on ChatGPT ads goes into being cited.
- **Eligible, not yet cited:** most of it into earning the answer, a capped slice into testing.
- **Eligible and cited:** a proper test, judged on cost per qualified lead.

Risks to manage

Risk	What to do
Policy changes or differs by country	Check the live policy before each campaign. Keep a dated copy of what you relied on
Brand next to an answer you don't control	Run the answer audit on the questions you target. If the answer is wrong about you, fix that first
Over-reading early numbers	Agree the decision rule before launch, not after
Regulated claims slipping into ad copy	Same review route as any other paid channel

Questions to ask your agency

- Have you checked our category against the current policy, including non-US rules?
- What share of our audience will actually see these ads?
- Who does ChatGPT cite for our top questions today, and what's the plan to change that?
- What result would make you recommend stopping?

ACTION PLAN AND CHEAT SHEET

What to do this month

This week

- [ ] Run the ten-question answer audit
- [ ] Check your category against the live ad policy
- [ ] Estimate how many of your buyers use free or Go plans
- [ ] Score yourself out of 20

This month

- [ ] If you're restricted: move budget into being cited
- [ ] If you're eligible: fill in the test plan
- [ ] Set up pixel, UTMs and baseline numbers
- [ ] Brief the team: ads sit under the answer
- [ ] Diary a check on Google AI Mode ads for the UK

CHEAT SHEET

Who sees ads

Free and Go only. Not Plus, Pro, Business, Enterprise, Edu or under-18s. None near health, mental health or politics.

Who can't buy

Regulated medical, legal services, most finance, political content, gambling, alcohol.

How to buy

Ads Manager. CPM or CPC. Never pay per conversion. Reported £15 daily minimum.

The rule

Earn the answer first. Test ads second. Decide on cost per qualified lead.

SOURCES

Where the facts come from

OpenAI's own pages first. Secondary reports and panel data are labelled. Policies change: check the live versions before you act.

OpenAI: Testing ads in ChatGPT (Feb 2026, updated Mar and May 2026)
https://openai.com/index/testing-ads-in-chatgpt/

OpenAI: New ways to buy ChatGPT ads (May 2026)
https://openai.com/index/new-ways-to-buy-chatgpt-ads/

OpenAI: Ad policies (updated 4 June 2026)
https://openai.com/policies/ad-policies/

Digiday: ChatGPT ads land in the UK (June 2026)
https://digiday.com/marketing/chatgpt-ads-land-in-u-k-as-openai-outlines-eu-privacy-rules/

Digiday: OpenAI expands Ads Manager to the UK (June 2026)
https://digiday.com/marketing/openai-expands-ads-manager-to-u-k-adds-cpc/

PPC Land: ChatGPT ads in 89 countries, OpenAI figures (Oct 2026, secondary)
https://ppc.land/advertisers-in-26-more-countries-gain-chatgpt-ads-bringing-the-total-to-89/

Similarweb: ChatGPT ads CTR by country (Oct 2026, panel data)
https://aisearch.similarweb.com/blog/chatgpt-ads-ctr-by-country/

Everything PR: ChatGPT ads advertiser guide, reported minimum budget (Oct 2026, secondary)
https://everything-pr.com/chatgpt-ads-advertiser-guide

Ofcom: From apps to AI search (Dec 2025)
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/media-use-and-attitudes/online-habits/from-apps-to-ai-search-how-the-uk-goes-online-in-2025

Google: Ads in AI Mode (Oct 2026)
https://blog.google/products/ads-commerce/ads-in-ai-mode-global/

SEVENTHELEMENT

Buy it, earn it, or both?

We plan paid media, SEO, GEO and AEO as one system, so the ad and the answer work together. Especially in sectors where you can't buy your way in.

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