

The Q4 Sequencing Checklist

01 · By Oct 15
Media

02 · Oct 16–31
Influencers

03 · Nov 1–30
**Promotions +
Performance**

Black Friday Nov 27
Cyber Monday Nov 30

Why This Year Is Different

AI tools recommend what several credible sources already agree on. One claim, repeated across every channel, is what gets corroborated.

693%

Rise in AI-referred traffic to U.S. retail sites, 2025 holiday season (Adobe)

29%

Of shoppers plan to use AI this holiday, up from 22% (PwC)

75%

Of those AI users turn to it to research products (PwC)

STEP 0 Lock the Message Before any window opens

- ☐ 3–5 core claims, each specific and provable
- ☐ Outside proof for each: third-party testing, expert validation, or clinical/consumer data
- ☐ Same claim language shared with all teams before production
- ☐ Product confirmed to perform as claimed

WINDOW 1 · BY OCTOBER 15

Media Carries the Claim

Working rule: earned media needs about 4 to 6 weeks of runway. Past October 15? Shift weight to Windows 2 and 3, and start Window 1 now for the December gift-buying window.

- ☐ Placements live where possible: online guide updates, reviews, evergreen roundups
- ☐ Pitches sent, not just drafted, for anything still open
- ☐ Credentialed spokesperson briefed
- ☐ Target list covers your category's highest-citation outlets
- ☐ Placements tracked with publish dates

WINDOW 2 · OCTOBER 16–31

Influencers Echo the Claim

- ☐ Creator briefs use the exact media claim
- ☐ Posts staggered to land after placements are live
- ☐ At least one dynamic format (video, demo, unboxing)
- ☐ Amplification budget set for top performers

WINDOW 3 · NOVEMBER 1–30

Promotions and Performance Marketing Close on the Claim

Set the offer Nov 1–20

- ☐ Codes and offers loaded into e-commerce and ad platforms
- ☐ Promo creative repeats the claim language
- ☐ Email and SMS scheduled
- ☐ Retail and marketplace listings carry the same claim

Close Nov 21–30

- ☐ Retargeting built from media and influencer traffic
- ☐ Paid creative pulls the locked claim language
- ☐ Budget weighted to retargeting
- ☐ Post-purchase review capture set up

Why the Proof Step Matters

All 10 editors at our latest Culinary House responded. Third-party testing and expert practitioners were the most trusted sources (7 of 10 each), and a brand's own data ranked lowest. "Didn't perform as described" was the #2 reason a brand gets cut from a story in progress.

Prime Big Deal Days, Oct 6–7

This falls before Window 1 closes. Build a shorter plan on your locked claim using promotions, influencers, and paid.