

MAKING AI WRITING SOUND (ALMOST) HUMAN STEPS AND STRATEGIES

Editing the writing generated by artificial intelligence is necessary so the content creator or organization can ensure accuracy, add a human “voice” to the text, and own the result. The goal is to keep AI-generated text to roughly one-third of the total to personalize the content. *AI is the instrument, but you are the musician.*

Steps for Editing

1. **Read for understanding:** Read without editing to identify the overall structure.
2. **Restructure:** Rearrange paragraphs and sections for a logical flow that aligns with your purpose.
3. **Revise and humanize:** Vary the sentence structure (as a human would), improve word choices (to match your vocabulary or your organization’s writing), and add real-world experiences (yours or your work team’s).
4. **Verify:** Verify all facts and identified sources.
5. **Reread and refine:** Read the text aloud. Reading aloud forces the brain to slow down and focus on what was written, not what could be written. It engages your sight and your hearing, making it easier to spot mistakes or awkward writing.

Strategies for Each Step

- **Read for understanding:**
 - **Skim:** Scan the abstract, the table of contents (or navigation pane), and the content headings and subheadings. These are the structural “signposts” of the text that indicate how the content is organized—by time (chronological), by theme, or by other logic (cause and effect, etc.).
 - **Sample:** Read only the key text, including the introduction or summary, the conclusion, and the first sentences of paragraphs. The topic sentences should “tell the story.”
 - **Spot:** Pay attention to transition words. Examples include “However,” “Therefore,” “As a result,” “In contrast,” and others. These words signal a change in direction or indicate a new data point.
 - **Glance:** Look at any tables, charts, and other graphics. They often summarize key points or provide supporting data.
 - **Grasp:** Identify the overall structure or logic of the text—problem and solution, cause and effect, arguments and evidence, etc. Recognize the relationships between sections and record impressions of any possible gaps.
- **Restructure:** AI writing can include unnecessary sections, abrupt transitions, and filler words.
 - Eliminate repetitive, wordy, or unnecessary sections to improve readability. For example, AI often includes preview and summary paragraphs that may be unnecessary for your audience.
 - Improve transitions within and between paragraphs and between sections. Look up lists of potential transition words and phrases.
 - Clean up the “adjective pile-up on aisle 7.” AI often strings multiple adjectives together when one does the job. You can search online for common adjective strings in AI-generated text.

- **Revise:** AI writing can sound formal or academic in one paragraph and casual or conversational in another.
 - Know your audience. Ensure the tone of the text is appropriate for your audience and aligns with your organization’s style guidelines.
 - “Listen” for a consistent tone.
 - Include words of value to the reader—and that support search engine optimization for your audience.
 - Replace “AI language” with your own choices.
 - Overused words and phrases: Some words and phrases appear more often in AI-generated text than in human writing. Look up synonyms online to help you find alternatives.
 - “Hedging” language: Some examples include “might,” “may,” “generally speaking,” and other AI cop-outs. Take a position appropriate to your purpose.
- **Humanize:** AI writing can only include what others have said. *AI has no lived experience.*
 - Integrate personal and team experiences, stories, opinions, and examples to add authenticity (and credibility).
 - Use “I” and “we” as appropriate. AI often produces text that sounds like a textbook, not like a person.
 - Express a definite and accurate point of view, as appropriate. AI often includes “balanced” arguments that can be the opposite of what you are trying to say.
 - Make sure your intended message comes through.
- **Verify:** AI can confidently present false information («hallucinations») and can repeat outdated data and known biases. (Biases enter AI-generated writing through the human-created datasets used to train AI.) AI can even invent plausible content sources.
 - Always verify all facts, names, and data.
 - Double-check any cultural references.
 - Eliminate biases, stereotypes, and prejudices.
 - Verify referenced sources.
- **Reread and refine:** Read aloud to yourself or to somebody else, ask somebody else to read to you, record yourself reading and play it back to yourself, or consider changing the font temporarily to something odd—like **Broadway** or Playbill—and reading (which forces your brain to view the text as new). Pay attention to:
 - Stumbling—Is the text tripping you up? A sentence may be awkwardly phrased or poorly punctuated.
 - Shortness of breath—Are you running out of breath trying to read one sentence? Break up long sentences.
 - Repetition—Are you hearing the same words repeatedly in a short time? Choose alternative words (synonyms).
 - Shifts in tone—Does the writing shift abruptly from formal to casual? Refine the wording for a consistent tone.
 - Clarity—Are you confused about anything? Revise the text as needed.

