

# How to Tell When Writing Sounds Like AI

A practical checklist and prompt for making AI-assisted writing sound more like you.

Traci Gurney · Digital Marketing Strategist

19 things to look for, and a prompt you can copy

BEFORE YOU  
START

None of these on its own means AI wrote something. People start to notice when several show up together, and most of all, when the writing doesn't sound like the person who sent it.

## CHECKLIST

01 to 06

## The obvious ones

### 01 Em dashes everywhere.

One is fine. If there are several in one post, swap some for a comma or a period.

### 02 Overused words.

Right now that's words like emphasizing, enhance, highlighting, and showcasing. Swap in the word you'd actually use.

### 03 A warm-up opener.

Something like "In today's fast-paced world." Delete the first sentence and see if you miss it.

### 04 "It's important to note" or "It's worth mentioning."

The sentence usually works fine without it.

### 05 A sign-off.

"I hope this helps," "Let's dive in." End when you're done.

### 06 Bold and emojis everywhere.

Save bold for the one thing you want people to see, and skip the emoji at the start of every line.

---

## The ones that are harder to spot

**07    Lists of three.**

Check whether all three items are pulling their weight, or whether there were really only two.

---

**08    "It's not X, it's Y."**

The second half is usually the real point, so just say that part.

---

**09    Two short sentences in a row that follow the same pattern.**

Like "Always clear. Always tidy." Once is fine, but a lot of them gives the writing a beat.

---

**10    Sentences and paragraphs that are all about the same length.**

Read it out loud. If it sounds like a recording, mix up the lengths.

---

**11    A lead-in before the point.**

"Here's the thing." Cut it and start with the point.

---

**12    Transitions everywhere.**

"Additionally," "Furthermore," "That said," "With that in mind." Most of the time you can just move on to the next thought.

---

**13    Keeping going after the point has landed.**

Saying the same thing twice in different words, adding caveats, or answering questions nobody asked. If a paragraph doesn't add anything new, cut it.

---

**14    Sentences that could belong to anyone.**

"Consistency is key to building trust with your audience." Ask yourself whether it could have come from 10,000 other posts.

---

**15    Sounding like an ad.**

Breathtaking views, clean and modern spaces, exceptional service. Say what the customer actually gets instead.

---

**16 Making everything sound important.**

"Plays a vital role," "is a testament to," "a game-changer." Just say what the thing does.

**17 A tacked-on ending.**

Sentences that end with "..., highlighting the importance of..." or "..., making it easier than ever to..." End the sentence one step earlier.

**18 Sources that aren't there.**

"Studies show," "experts agree." Ask where it came from. If there's no source you can check, take it out.

**19 The wrap-up.**

A recap at the end, a last paragraph starting with "Ultimately," or a neat closing line that sounds like it belongs on a poster. Stop when the point's been made.

---

**THE MOST  
IMPORTANT ONE**

---

**No person behind the words.**

The writing can pass every item above and still feel empty. Look for an opinion, a story, something you noticed, or a way of saying things that's yours. If there's nothing that only you would have written, add a sentence or two that only you could write.

---

**READ THIS FIRST**

---

**Before you use the prompt**

Don't try to remove every item on this list from everything you write. That creates a new pattern people can recognize. Use the list to notice where AI's habits have replaced the way you'd naturally say something. If you've always used em dashes or you really do talk in threes, keep them. Your own habits are what make it sound like you.

---

**THE PROMPT**

Two parts. Copy the one you need.

---

**The prompt**

**Before you write:** paste this at the start of a new chat, then ask for what you want written.

## THE RULES

Write like a person talking to one other person, not like an ad.

Rules:

- No em dashes. Use a period or a comma instead.
- Start with the point. No opening line that sets the scene ("In today's...", "In an era where...").
- Don't announce what's coming ("Here's the thing," "Here's what most people miss"). Just say it.
- Don't group things in threes out of habit. Use however many items are actually true.
- No "It's not X, it's Y" sentences.
- Don't put two short sentences in a row that follow the same pattern (like "Always clear. Always tidy").
- Let sentence and paragraph length vary. Some can be short, and some can run long.
- Don't use formal transitions like "Additionally," "Furthermore," "That said," or "With that in mind." Just move to the next thought.
- Say each point once. Don't restate it in different words, add caveats I didn't ask for, or answer questions nobody asked.
- Avoid generic statements that could appear in any post, like "Consistency is key." Say something specific instead.
- Use plain words. Avoid emphasizing, enhance, highlighting, showcasing, and any word I wouldn't say out loud to a customer.
- Describe things specifically. No "breathtaking," "exceptional," "clean and modern," or other ad language.
- Don't make things sound more important than they are. No "plays a vital role," "is a testament to," or "game-changer."
- Don't end sentences with an extra phrase like "..., highlighting the importance of..." or "..., making it easier than ever to..."
- No "It's important to note" or "It's worth mentioning."
- Don't mention studies, research, or experts unless I gave you the source.
- No bold text, and no emojis at the start of lines, unless I ask for them.
- Don't summarize at the end, don't start the last paragraph with "Ultimately" or "In the end," and don't finish paragraphs on a neat quotable line.
- No sign-offs like "I hope this helps" or "Let's dive in."

If a specific detail, example, or opinion from me would make this stronger, ask me for it instead of writing something generic.

Don't force awkward wording just to follow a rule. Meaning and sounding natural come first.

Before you answer, check your draft against every rule above and fix anything that breaks one. Give me only the final version.

**For something you've already written:** paste the rules above, then this, then your text.

#### THE REWRITE

Here's something I wrote with AI. Rewrite it using the rules above. Keep my meaning and every specific detail. After the rewrite, list which rules the original broke, and point out anywhere it could use a detail or opinion only I would know.

---

The page version, with copy buttons: [tracigurney.com/ai-writing-checklist/](https://tracigurney.com/ai-writing-checklist/)