

Anti-AI Writing Style Rules.

A reference guide for writing that sounds genuinely human. Banned words, banned expressions, banned patterns.

PUBLISHED MAY 2026

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Why this file exists.

Most AI output reads like AI. Not because the model is bad, but because it leans on a small set of words, expressions, and structural patterns. Once you spot them, you cannot unsee them.

This guide is the list. Every word and pattern below is a tell. Load it into your AI tool before you write a single prompt, and 80% of the AI smell disappears from the output.

About this list. Collated from a wide range of public sources on AI writing tells. Refined, edited, and adjusted for the way small business owners actually write.

Five rules that govern everything else.

- 01** No em dashes.

- 02** No semicolons.

- 03** Short sentences.

- 04** Active voice.

- 05** No vague marketing language.

The banned word list.

Every word below reads as AI-generated. Do not use them.

A

accentuate · accelerate · actionable · adaptive · additionally (esp. opening a sentence) · agile
· AI-powered · align / align with · always-on · automate

B

boast / boasts · bolstered · breakthrough

C

cloud-native · commendable · comprehensive · craft / crafted (as quality signal) · crucial
· customizable · cutting-edge

D

data-driven · delve · democratize · disruptive · dynamic

E

ecosystem · effortless · elevate · empower · emphasize / emphasizing · enduring · enhance
· efficient · explore / exploring

F

findings · foster / fostering · foundational · framework (used abstractly) · frictionless
· future-proof

G

game-changer · garner · groundbreaking

H

harness · highlight (as a verb) · holistic · hyper-personalized

The list, continued.

I

immersive · innovative · insightful · integrated · intelligent · interplay · intricate / intricacies
· intuitive

J

journey (used abstractly)

K

key (as an adjective)

L

landscape (used abstractly) · leading-edge · leverage

M

machine-first · meticulous / meticulously · mission-critical

N

navigate / navigating · next-gen / next-generation · nuance / nuanced

O

open-ended · optimize

P

paradigm / paradigm-shifting · personalized · pioneering · pivotal · plug-and-play
· potential · predictive · proactive · proprietary

The list, finished.

R

realm · redefine · reimagine · reliable · resonate / resonates · results-driven · revolutionize
· robust

S

scalable · seamless · showcase / showcasing · smart
· space ("in this space", "the marketing space") · state-of-the-art · streamline · surpass
· synergy / synergize

T

tapestry (used abstractly) · testament · trailblazing · trajectory · transformative · transparent
· turnkey

U

unleash · unlock · unpack / unpacking · unparalleled · unprecedented
· underscore (as a verb)

V

valuable · versatile · vibrant · visionary

RULE

A "do not" list outperforms a "do" list. The AI already knows how to write. Tell it what to stop.

Banned expressions.

These are structural patterns. Avoid the formula, not just the exact wording.

01 "In a world where" drama

Sets up a vague cinematic premise and drops a moral.

EXAMPLE – "In a world where content is infinite, curation becomes priceless."

→ **BAN IT IN ANY FORM**

02 "Most people vs the few who" split

Moralising generalisation that flatters the reader.

EXAMPLE – "Most people use AI to move faster. The few who win use it to think deeper."

→ **BAN IT IN ANY FORM**

03 "Stop doing X. Start doing Y." switch

Simple binary that sounds profound and says nothing.

EXAMPLE – "Stop collecting prompts. Start building workflows."

→ **BAN IT IN ANY FORM**

04 "Not this. Not that. But this." triple

Two strawmen followed by a fake insight.

EXAMPLE – "It's not about perfect prompts. It's not about new tools. It's about repeating one boring workflow every day."

→ **BAN IT IN ANY FORM**

Expressions, continued.

05 "If you're not doing X, you're already behind" FOMO

Productivity threat dressed up as advice.

EXAMPLE – "If you're not using AI to review your work, you're already behind."

→ **BAN IT IN ANY FORM**

06 "The real work is..." reveal

Downplays visible effort, glorifies an invisible layer.

EXAMPLE – "The real game isn't learning tools. It's learning when not to use them."

→ **BAN IT IN ANY FORM**

07 "You don't need more X. You need Y." minimalist smack

Pretends to simplify while saying nothing specific.

EXAMPLE – "You don't need more AI tools. You need one process you repeat."

→ **BAN IT IN ANY FORM**

08 "It's never been easier / harder" paradox

Big era statement with two exaggerated claims.

EXAMPLE – "It's never been easier to create content. It's never been harder to be remembered."

→ **BAN IT IN ANY FORM**

Expressions, finished.

09 "Here's the truth" / "What nobody tells you" fake reveal

Signals depth before stating something obvious.

EXAMPLE – "Here's the truth: AI won't fix a boring offer."
"What nobody tells you is that prompts don't matter if you never ship."

→ **BAN IT IN ANY FORM**

10 "Not X, but Y" negative parallelism

Retroactively challenges a conclusion the reader never had.

EXAMPLE – "The trigger was not a new UI. The trigger was trust."

→ **BAN IT IN ANY FORM**

11 Summary and conclusion clichés

AI closes by summarising what it just said. If the point was made, it does not need restating.

EXAMPLE – "In summary," "To sum up," "In conclusion," "All in all," "The bottom line is," "The key takeaway is," "Here's the kicker."

→ **BAN THEM IN ANY FORM**

12 False directness openers

AI signals honesty before saying something ordinary.

EXAMPLE – "Honestly?" "Let me be direct." "Here's the thing." "Let me be clear."
"Let's be honest."

→ **BAN THEM IN ANY FORM**

13 Transitional filler phrases

AI announces the next sentence instead of writing it.

EXAMPLE – "First and foremost," "That said," "It's worth noting that," "It goes without saying," "Needless to say," "As mentioned above," "At the end of the day."

The patterns that give it away.

These are structural giveaways. They sit underneath word choice and survive a thesaurus pass. Train yourself to spot them.

A Significance puffery

Avoid framing ordinary facts as historically significant.

Watch: stands as, serves as, marks a shift, key turning point, evolving landscape, deeply rooted, reflects broader, setting the stage for, indelible mark.

B Copulative substitution

AI avoids "is" and "are" and replaces them with fancier verbs.

Avoid: serves as, stands as, boasts, features, offers, maintains — when a simple "is" or "has" will do.

C Rule of three

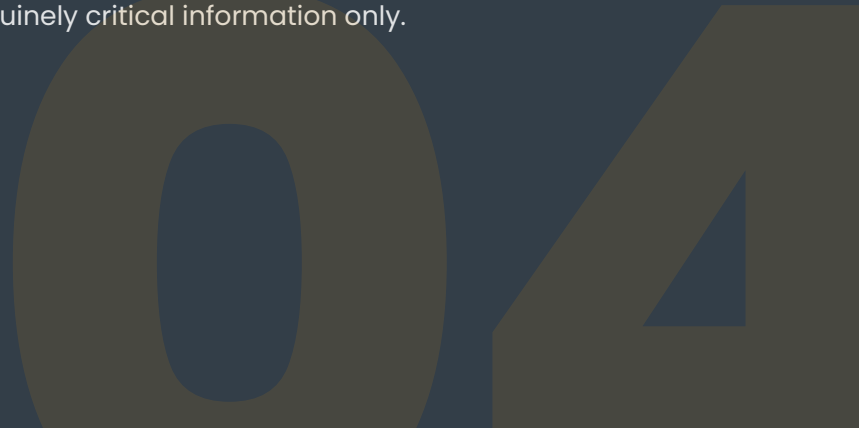
AI overuses three-part lists: adjective, adjective, adjective. Phrase, phrase, and phrase. Break the pattern. Use two items, or one strong one.

D Elegant variation

AI avoids repeating a noun by cycling through synonyms (protagonist, key player, eponymous character). Repeat the noun. Clarity beats variety.

E Collaborative filler & overuse of bold

Never open or close with "I hope this helps", "Of course!", "Certainly!", "Would you like...", "Let me know", "Here is a...". And reserve **bold** for genuinely critical information only.



Tips to get the most out of this document.

1

Load it into your AI tool before you prompt.

Paste the whole file as context before you write anything. In Claude, add it to a Project. In ChatGPT, add it to a Custom GPT or paste it at the start of your session. This trains the output before a single word is generated, not after.

2

Add your own banned words.

Every industry and every voice has its own clichés. A legal consultant will have different tells from a florist. Read back three months of your own content, find the words you repeat on autopilot, and add them to the list.

3

Add your own banned expressions.

The structural patterns in this file are universal. But you will also have personal formulas you reach for when you are tired or rushed. Write them down. Ban them by name.

Tips, finished.

4

Add a spelling and style line.

If you are British, add UK spelling. If you are writing for a US audience, add US spelling. If your brand never uses contractions, add that rule. The file is a foundation. Your voice rules go on top.

5

Paste a writing sample alongside it.

When you upload the file, also paste in a piece of your own writing that you are proud of. Tell the AI: "This is what my voice sounds like. Apply the anti-AI rules and write in this voice." The banned list tells it what to avoid. The sample shows it what to aim for.

THE WHOLE SYSTEM

Banned words tell the AI what to stop. Banned expressions tell it what patterns to avoid. A writing sample tells it what to aim for. Three layers. One voice.

Turn this PDF into your .md file.

Once you have worked through the five tips on the previous page, you can convert this guide into a reusable context file. Upload the PDF to Claude, ChatGPT, or Gemini and use the prompt below.

DO THE TIPS FIRST

This guide is a starting point, not a finished file. The tips on page 12 are how you make it yours. Add your own banned words. Add your own banned expressions. Add a spelling line. Paste a writing sample. Then convert. The goal is a voice that is uniquely yours, stripped of the AI markers.

COPY AND PASTE THIS PROMPT

```
I am attaching a PDF called "Anti-AI Writing Style Rules".
```

```
Convert the entire contents into a single Markdown (.md) file called anti-ai-writing-style.md.
```

```
Rules:
```

1. Plain markdown only. No tables, no fancy formatting.
2. Keep every banned word and banned expression exactly as written.
3. Exclude the cover page, the "Tips to get the most out of this document" page, and the closing CTA page.
4. Apply the file's own rules to the output. No em dashes, no semicolons, short sentences, active voice.
5. Output the full file as a single code block I can copy and save as anti-ai-writing-style.md.

```
Then wait. I will paste in my own banned words, banned expressions, and a writing sample so we can extend the file to match my voice.
```

→ SAVE THE OUTPUT AS ANTI-AI-WRITING-STYLE.MD

Sound like you.

A 30-minute clarity call. No pitch. We help you build your banned word list, banned expressions, and writing-sample pack tailored to your voice.

LET'S TALK

STRATEGY-LED

RESULTS-FOCUSED

PEOPLE-FIRST

CLARITY IN EVERY STEP

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