

## The AI Bootcamp

# 10

## Make AI Sound Like You

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**In this chapter you'll learn**

The tells worth scanning for, and a voice note you write once and reuse for a year

# The AI Bootcamp

## THE PROBLEM

Most AI education is a pile of disconnected tips. A LinkedIn carousel here, a YouTube tutorial there, a \$2,000 cohort course that goes out of date before the refund window closes. None of it is built to be read in order, so nothing compounds. You finish twelve videos and can recite twelve facts, not perform one new skill.

## THE FIX

The AI Bootcamp is built the other way. 90 skills, packed 2 to 3 per chapter, 36 chapters, 3 tracks. Every chapter states what it needs from you and what it hands to the chapter after it, so skill 47 only works because skill 12 already landed. Read it in order and by the end you are not collecting facts about AI, you are running work through it.

### LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

We built this because we kept meeting smart people who felt behind on AI for no reason other than nobody had organized the material for them.

This book does not assume you are technical, and it does not water anything down either. Every chapter earns its place: a real skill, a real exercise, a one-page companion you can flip back to in month three when you have forgotten the details but still need the answer.

If a chapter loses you, or a chapter changes how you work, I want to hear about it either way.

*Kris*

Editor, AI Central

Write to me at [editor@thecentral.ai](mailto:editor@thecentral.ai)

## THE 3 TRACKS

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### AI 101

#### Get running

Pick a tool, set it up, write a clear instruction, use it safely at work.

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### AI 202

#### Prompt properly

The framework behind every good instruction, and catching AI when it is wrong.

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### AI 303

#### Build without watching it

Connect AI to your tools, and automations that run while you are not looking.

**IN THIS LESSON YOU'LL LEARN**

By the end of this chapter you can name the patterns that actually give AI writing away, capture your own voice from 3 things you already wrote, and run a 5-point scan over any draft before it goes out with your name on it.

Your writing is how colleagues decide whether there is a person behind the work. A draft that reads as machine-written costs a senior professional more than it costs anyone else, and the usual fix, describing your style in adjectives, produces exactly the voice you were trying to get away from.

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|          | 10.2 | The tells are patterns, not words   |
|          | 10.3 | Give it 3 things you already wrote  |
|          | 10.4 | Read it once, looking for 5 things  |

**TOPICS REQUIRED**

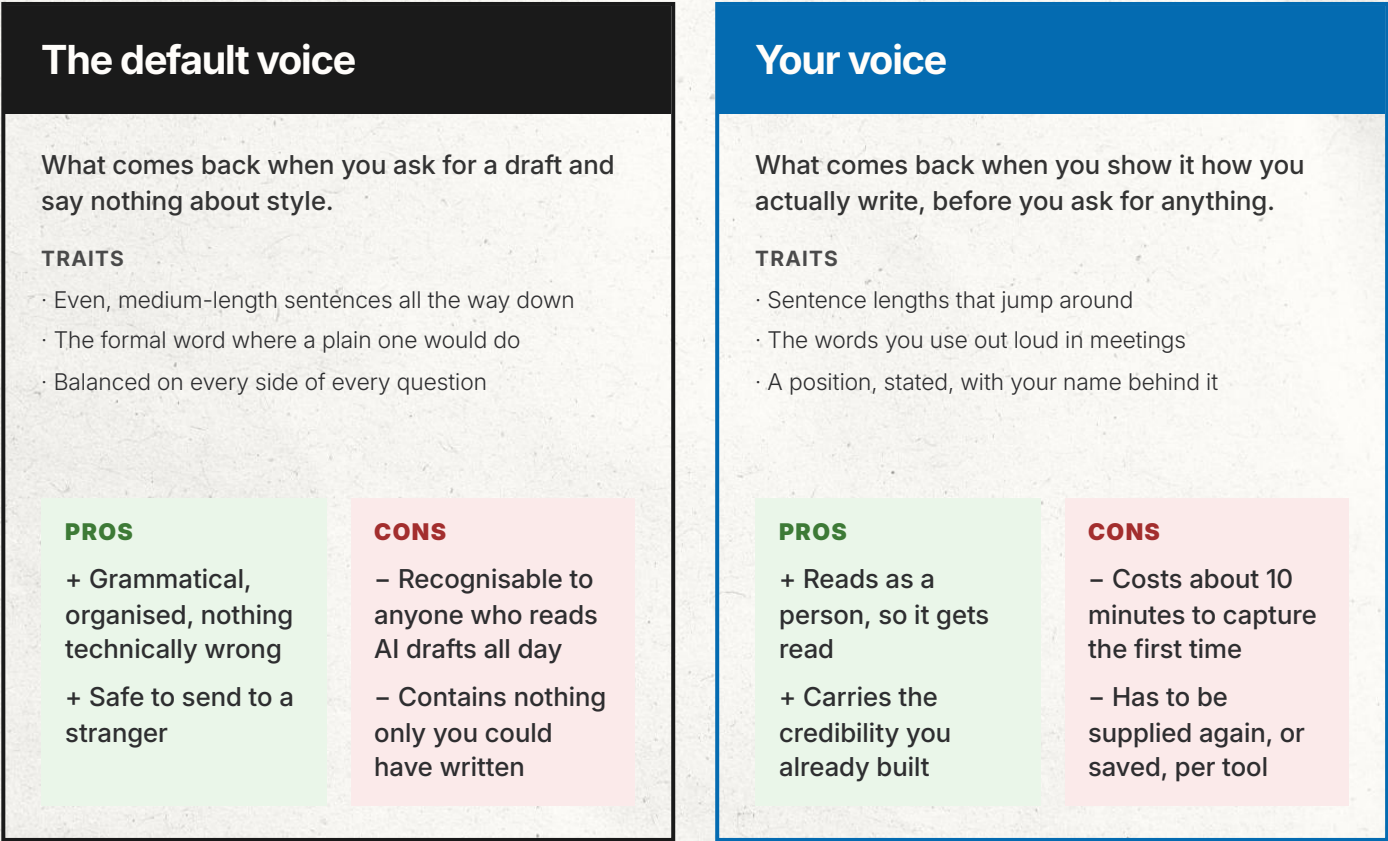
Chapter 9. You need your open account and the rules you set there about what can safely be pasted in, because this chapter asks you to paste in your own writing.

**AFTER THIS CHAPTER**

Chapter 11 assumes you have a voice note written down, and that you are tired of pasting it at the top of every new chat.

# 10.1 The default voice belongs to nobody

Every assistant has a house style you did not choose. It reads as competent, polite and faintly corporate, and it is the most common reason a draft comes back unusable.



**Fig 10.1** The default is not neutral. It is a specific register, tuned to be acceptable to as many readers as possible, which is why it reads as written for nobody.

## 10.1

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**It is an average.** Trained on an enormous quantity of published text, then tuned to please most readers. The average is the product.

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**Your name is on it.** The cost lands on you, not the tool. People judge the sender, not the software.

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**It is fixable.** Voice is the one AI problem you can solve entirely with material you already own.

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**Here is the problem this chapter exists to fix. The draft comes back clean. Grammatical, organised, nothing you could point at and call wrong. You read it again and something is off, and then you place it: it does not sound like you, and anyone who has read your emails for 3 years would notice inside 2 sentences.**

That matters more for you than it does for most people. A junior colleague sending an AI-flavoured email loses very little. A director sending one spends down something slower to rebuild, because what your writing has been quietly establishing for years is that a specific person is behind it who knows what they think. Flat machine prose says the opposite, whatever the words happen to be.

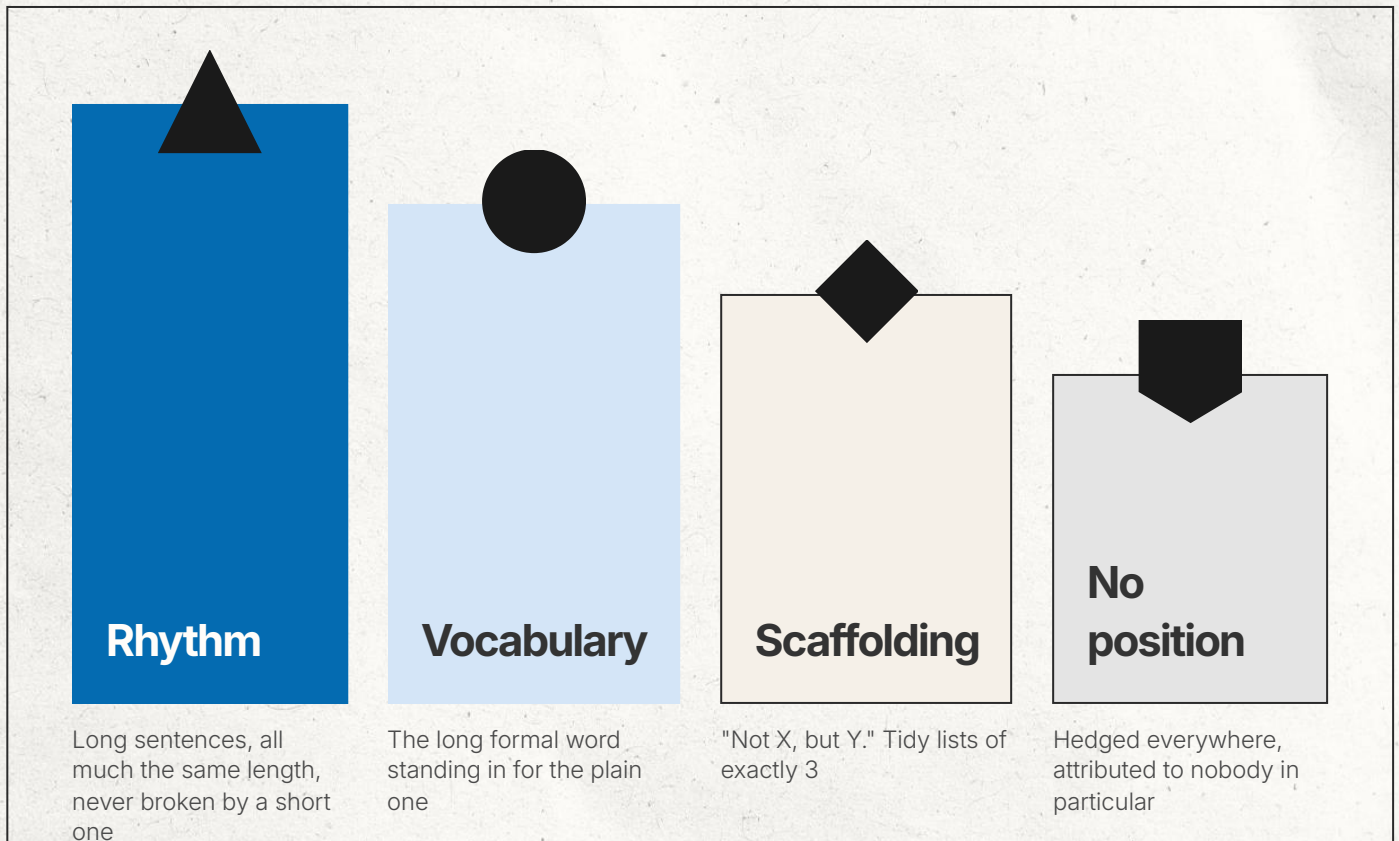
The reason it sounds that way is not mysterious. An assistant was trained on a vast amount of published writing and then tuned, with human feedback, to be helpful and inoffensive to as many readers as possible. What comes out is the middle of that distribution: the register that would pass in the largest number of situations. Acceptable to everyone reads, in practice, as written for nobody.

So the default is not an absence of style. It is a style, with preferences, and it is competing with yours every time you ask for a draft. Say nothing about voice and you get its voice. That is the entire mechanism, and it is worth knowing because it tells you what the fix has to be.

The fix is that you already have years of your own writing sitting in a sent folder. The rest of this chapter is about what to do with 3 pieces of it, and what to look for in the 20 seconds before you press send.

# 10.2 The tells are patterns, not words

Most of what circulates about spotting AI writing is folklore, and some of it is backwards. What gives a draft away is how the sentences are built, and how many of them are built the same way.



**Fig 10.2** Four families of tell. The bar heights are visual rhythm, not a ranking: in a real draft these arrive together, and it is the pile that gives it away rather than any one item.

## 10.2

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**Em dashes.** The famous tell, and the weakest one. In a 1.2 million word comparison published in August 2026, only Claude used them more than human writers did.

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**Punctuation.** The real signal runs the other way. Models use fewer commas and semicolons than people, and almost no parentheses.

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**Density, not presence.** Good writers use every device on this page. The tell is finding 5 of them together on one page.

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**Start with the famous one, because it is wrong and it has been making people edit their own prose for no reason. The em dash has been treated as proof of AI authorship for years now.**

In August 2026 The Economist compared 1.2 million words of its own journalism against versions of the same articles written by ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Grok, and benchmarked the lot against other newspapers and against novels. Of the 4 models, only Claude used em dashes more often than human writers did. ChatGPT used noticeably fewer than everyone. If you have been stripping dashes out of your writing to avoid suspicion, you have been editing for a rumour.

What the same comparison did find is far more useful, because it is about construction rather than characters. Chatbot sentences run long, and they run long consistently, with paragraphs rarely broken by a short statement. Their single most overused word was "and". They reach for the polysyllable over the plain word, leaning on things like "significant", "increasingly" and "consequences", and on scientific vocabulary like "parameter" and "methodology", in places where something shorter was available. And they punctuate less than people do, not more: fewer commas, fewer semicolons, hardly any parentheses.

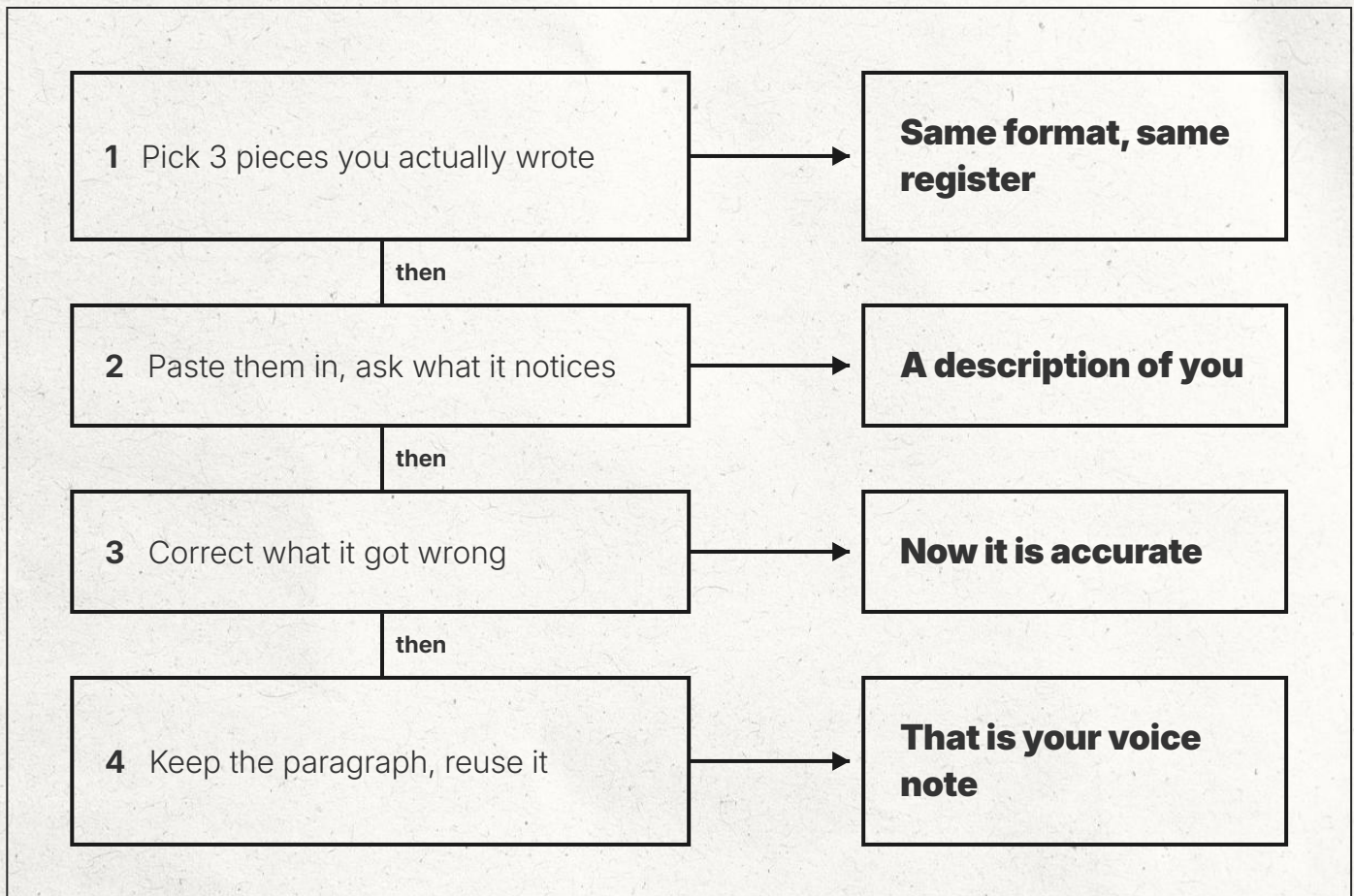
Then there is the scaffolding. Not X, but Y. Not only X, but also Y. The list of exactly 3 things where the third was clearly added to finish the shape. These are legitimate devices that good writers have used for centuries, which is why hunting for them one at a time is useless. The finding that matters is one of rate: the models measured reached for them more often per thousand sentences than the humans they were set against.

The last family is the one your colleagues feel without being able to name. The draft has no view in it. Every side is given its due, everything is worth noting, and claims get attributed to "industry reports" or to "experts" who are never identified. It reads like something written by an institution that has been sued before. For a senior person that is the expensive part, because taking a position is most of what people read you for.

You are going to ask whether you can just run the draft through a detector. No, and be wary of anyone who runs one on you. OpenAI withdrew its own AI text classifier in July 2023, saying it caught 26% of AI-written text while flagging 9% of human writing as machine-made. A Stanford study the same year found popular detectors misclassified more than 61% of essays by non-native English speakers as AI-generated. Vendors quote far better numbers than independent testing produces. Treat a detector score as an opinion, never as evidence, in either direction.

# 10.3 Give it 3 things you already wrote

Describing your style in words works badly and takes longer than the alternative. Showing it 3 pieces of your own writing works immediately, and the capture only has to happen once.



**Fig 10.3** The capture, done once. Step 3 is the one people skip, and it is what turns a generic description into something worth reusing for a year.

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### 10.3

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**Show, do not describe.** Words like "professional" and "concise" describe most business writing ever published. Three real emails describe one person.

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**One format at a time.** A board memo and a LinkedIn post average into something that is neither. Match the samples to the job.

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**Check before you paste.** Chapter 9 set the rules for what your samples may contain. Client names and live figures usually do not qualify.

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**The instinct is to describe your style, and it is the wrong place to start. "Write in a professional but approachable tone" produces the exact default voice you were trying to escape, because that sentence describes almost everything ever written at work.**

Show it instead. Find 3 things you wrote yourself, in the same format as the thing you want drafted: 3 sent emails if you want an email, 3 posts if you want a post. Keep them short, a few hundred words each is plenty, and choose ones you were pleased with rather than ones that happened to be long. Do not mix formats. Mixed samples give you a blur.

Now the move that makes this worth doing at all. Do not ask it to imitate anything yet. Paste the samples in and ask what it notices about how you write: how long your sentences run, which words you reach for, how you open, how you close, what you never do. What comes back is a description of your own writing, and it will be more useful than anything you would have written about yourself, because nobody is a reliable witness to their own habits.

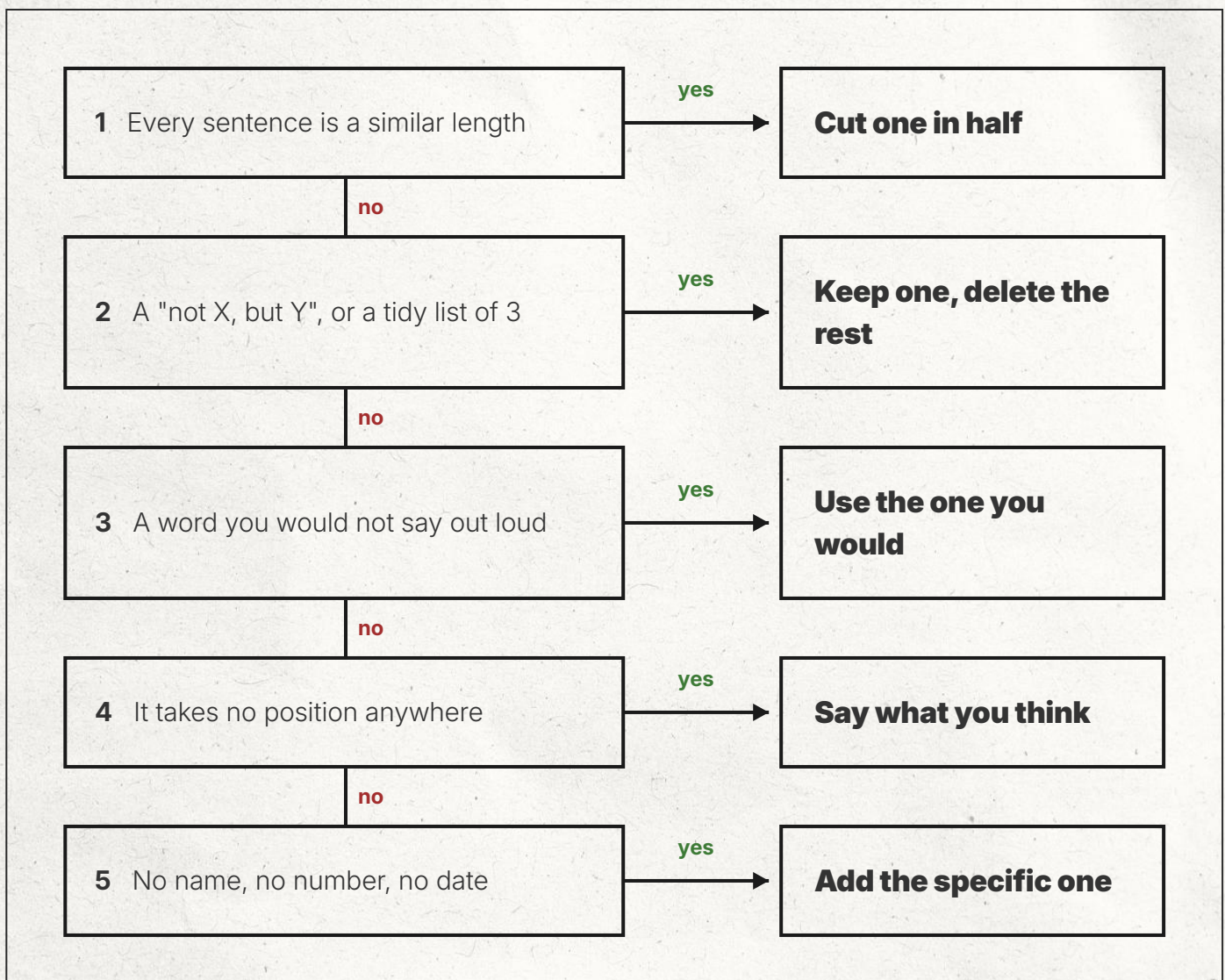
Read that description and correct it. It will get 2 or 3 things wrong. It will also state as a rule something you did once by accident, so delete that, and add the thing you know about your writing that it missed. What you are left with is a short paragraph that genuinely describes how you write. That paragraph is the asset. Call it your voice note.

From then on, drafting starts with the voice note pasted above the request, plus one sample when the piece matters. It costs 5 seconds and it is the difference between editing a draft and rewriting one. Chapter 11 covers where to keep it so you stop pasting it by hand, and Chapter 14 teaches examples properly as a technique, well past the question of voice.

Be realistic about the ceiling while you are at it. Samples get you most of the way and not all of the way, and the last stretch is you, editing. That is not the method failing. It is why the next section is a scan you run before anything leaves your outbox.

# 10.4 Read it once, looking for 5 things

Before anything goes out under your name, run this. Five checks, top to bottom, in about the time it takes to read the draft once.



**Fig 10.4** The scan. None of it is about grammar: every check asks whether a person made a decision at that point in the sentence.

**10.4**

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**Read the opening aloud.** If you would not start a call that way, it is not your opening line.

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**Specifics are the cure.** A real name, a real number, a real date. No model can invent the detail only you were there for.

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**One pass is enough.** You are not rewriting from scratch. Four or 5 small edits is the normal result, and it is enough.

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**You will not catch this by reading carefully. You catch it by reading fast, once, hunting for 5 specific things, the way you scan a contract for the number instead of reading the clauses.**

First, sentence length. Run your eye down the right-hand edge of the paragraph. If every line ends in roughly the same place, that is the thing readers notice without knowing they noticed it, and the fix takes 4 seconds. Break one long sentence in half and let the short half stand on its own. Like that.

Second and third, the constructions and the words. Search the draft for "not" and see whether you have written "not X, but Y" twice on one page. Count any list of 3 and ask whether the third item is doing work or completing a shape. Then find the word you would never use in a meeting. Utilise. Facilitate. Robust. Swap each one for what you would actually say.

Fourth and fifth are about substance rather than style, and they are the two that matter most. Does the piece take a position anywhere? If every paragraph is even-handed, write the sentence that says what you think. And does it contain anything specific: a person, a number, a date, what was actually said in the meeting on Tuesday? Detail is what an assistant cannot supply, because it was not there. It is also the fastest way to make a page sound like you.

Two habits are worth keeping past this chapter. Read the first line aloud every time, because the opening is where the default voice shows itself most plainly. And treat yourself as editing rather than approving: a draft you changed 5 things in is a draft you wrote. Take something you were going to send this week and run the scan on it now, before you write anything new.

READING ENDS HERE

# Everything before was reading. Everything after is doing.

3 exercises, About 15 minutes and one real decision that opens Chapter 11.

# Do these before Chapter 11

3 exercises. About 15 minutes

Choose the 3 pieces of your own writing you will use as samples. Same format, same register, ones you were pleased with. Name them here so you can find them again.

SAMPLE 1

SAMPLE 2

SAMPLE 3

Paste the 3 samples in and ask what it notices about how you write. Correct whatever it got wrong, then write the 3 truest lines of that description here. This is your voice note.

Take a draft you already have and run the 5-point scan on it. Write down which check caught something, and what you changed.

# Chapter 10 on one page

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## THE 20-SECOND SCAN

Sentences all one length · "not X, but Y" · tidy lists of 3 · a word you would not say aloud · no position and no specifics

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## WHAT IS NOT A TELL

The em dash. In a 1.2 million word comparison published August 2026, only Claude used more of them than human writers, and ChatGPT used fewer

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## WHAT IS A TELL

Long sentences of uniform length, formal words in place of plain ones, "not X but Y" scaffolding, and a draft that commits to nothing

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## THE VOICE NOTE

Paste 3 things you wrote, ask what it notices, correct the description, keep the paragraph. Reuse it above every drafting request

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## AI DETECTORS

An opinion, never evidence. OpenAI withdrew its own in 2023 at 26% accuracy, and detectors wrongly flag writing by non-native English speakers at high rates

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## BRING TO CHAPTER 11

Your corrected voice note, and one draft you have already run the scan on. Chapter 11 is about where instructions like that live so you stop retyping them.

### BOTTOM LINE

**You can spot the patterns that give AI writing away, capture your own voice from writing you already have, and check any draft in 20 seconds before it goes out.**

## NEXT CHAPTER

# Set It Up Once, Stop Repeating Yourself

Chapter 11 takes the voice note you just wrote, and everything else you retype at the start of every chat, and puts it somewhere the assistant reads on its own: saved instructions, projects and custom setups, so a new conversation does not begin from zero.

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## BRING WITH YOU

- ☐ Your corrected voice note from exercise 2
- ☐ The 2 or 3 things you explain again in every new chat

GO FURTHER

# The Ultimate AI Library

Every guide, prompt pack and playbook AI Central has published, in one place. The reference shelf this course keeps pointing you to.

explore the library



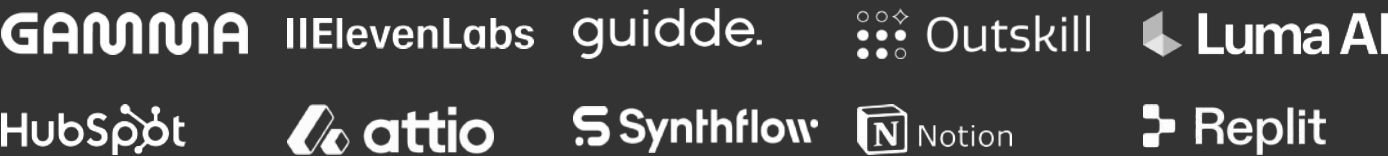
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