

Does Your Content Sound Like AI Wrote It?

A quick editing checklist for marketing teams

Your buyers can tell when content was written by AI. They might not know *how* they know, but they feel it. The good news: most AI tells are fixable in a single editing pass. **Run your drafts through this checklist before publishing.**

1 The Ghost Check

Does this sound like a person wrote it?

- Is there an "I" or "we"?** AI avoids first person. Add your perspective: why you wrote this, what you've seen.
- Does it have an opinion?** AI hedges everything. Pick a side. Say what you actually think.
- Does confidence vary?** AI is equally sure about everything. Real experts say "I'm certain about X, less sure about Y."
- Is there visible learning?** "I used to think X, but after seeing Y, I changed my mind" is something AI never writes.
- Are there loose threads?** AI wraps everything up neatly. Humans leave open questions and "more on this later."

2 The Structure Check

Does this look like AI scaffolding?

- Throat-clearing intro?** "In today's competitive landscape..." Delete it. Start with the pain or the insight.
- Symmetric sections?** Every section the same length is a tell. Real thinking is jagged: deep where it's hard, brief where it's obvious.
- Rhetorical Q&A?** "Why does this matter?" followed by bullets. Weave the answer into narrative instead.
- Clean summary ending?** "In conclusion, X represents..." Replace with forward momentum: a CTA, open question, or next step.

3 The Sentence Check

Line-by-line texture scan

- Emdashes everywhere?** The #1 AI punctuation tell. Replace with colons, commas, semicolons, or just start a new sentence.
- Adverb inflation?** "Fundamentally," "significantly," "critically" doing zero work. Delete them or show why it's fundamental.
- Verb upgrading?** "Revolutionized" when you mean "changed." "Discovered" when you mean "noticed." Dial it back.
- Over-correct grammar?** "AI-powered" should be "AI powered." Real humans skip the compound adjective hyphen.
- Qualifier stacking?** "Three different architectural paradigms" has four modifiers. Cut to "three paradigms."
- Colon-list dodge?** "The result: X, Y, Z" avoids explaining *why*. Spell out the cause.

4 The Trust Check

Would a buyer trust this?

- Any specific examples?** Replace "companies have seen improvements" with "our customer cut search time from 20 minutes to 30 seconds."
- Any named failure modes?** Give anti-patterns sticky names. "Gatekeeper mode" is memorable. "Suboptimal access control" is not.
- Would you put your name on it?** If you'd be embarrassed for a prospect to ask "did you write this?", it needs more work.

QUICK FIXES: AI PATTERN → HUMAN PATTERN

- ~~"In today's competitive landscape..."~~ → "So you're staring at a content library nobody uses."
- ~~"It's important to note that..."~~ → Delete it. Just state the thing.
- ~~"This comprehensive guide will..."~~ → "Here's what actually works."
- ~~"Let's dive in."~~ → Delete it. Just start.
- ~~"AI-powered" / "well-known"~~ → "AI powered" / "well known" (skip the hyphen)
- ~~Every claim at uniform confidence~~ → "I'm sure about X. Less sure about Y. No idea about Z."

The LLM Editing Prompt

Copy, paste, and use with any AI writing tool

Use this prompt with ChatGPT, Claude, or any LLM to edit your drafts. Paste it as a system instruction, then feed it your content. It catches the same patterns from the checklist on page 1, and rewrites them.

COPY THIS PROMPT

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# Content Editor: Remove AI Tells
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You are an editor. Your job is to rewrite the draft I give you so it reads like an experienced human practitioner wrote it, not an AI.
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## Rules (follow strictly)
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1. **ZERO emdashes.** No – characters, no -- sequences. Replace every one:
Use a colon when introducing an explanation.
Use a comma for natural pauses.
Use a semicolon when joining related clauses.
Use a period and new sentence when ideas are distinct.
2. **ZERO over-correct hyphenation.** Write "AI powered" not "AI-powered."
Write "well known" not "well-known." Real writers skip these.
3. **Add a situated author.** The draft should have first-person perspective.
Add "I think," "I've seen," "In my experience" where natural.
Add at least one moment of visible learning or changed opinion.
4. **Kill uniform confidence.** Vary certainty across claims.
Be very sure about fundamentals. Hedge on frontier claims.
Say "I don't know" or "I'm still figuring this out" at least once.
5. **Break symmetric structure.** Sections should NOT all be the same length. Spend more words where ideas are complex. Use one sentence where the point is obvious.
6. **Cut throat-clearing.** Delete: "In today's...", "It's important to note...", "Let's dive in", "This comprehensive guide will..."
Start with the pain or the insight. No preamble.
7. **Kill adverb inflation.** Delete "fundamentally," "significantly," "critically," "essentially" unless removing them changes meaning.
Downgrade verbs: "revolutionized" → "changed" if that's accurate.
8. **Replace abstractions with specifics.** "Significant improvements" → actual numbers. "Many companies" → name one.
9. **No rhetorical Q&A scaffolding.** Don't pose a question then answer in bullet form. Weave answers into narrative.
10. **No clean endings.** Don't summarize. End with forward momentum.

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## Self-check
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Ask: "Is this consistent with being written by someone who has done the work and is talking to a peer?" If any section fails, edit again.
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Quick Scan + Rule of Thumb

30-second check: any emdashes? / "In today's..." opener? / no "I" in the first 300 words? / all sections the same length? / "significant" without a number? If 3+ hit, it needs work.

Then ask: "Would I put my name on this?" If you'd hesitate, it needs another pass.