



Confessions of an AI-Assisted Writer

or...AI Is My Co-Pilot, Not My Ghostwriter

Did you really write it?

That question has become the litmus test of modern authorship. More and more writing contests, publications, and websites now proclaim, "*Zero tolerance for AI-generated writing.*" Some go even further, banning the use of artificial intelligence at any stage of the writing process—even for brainstorming, research, outlining, or editing.

At first glance, that sounds reasonable. No one wants an algorithm masquerading as an author.

But where, exactly, is the line?

If AI never writes a single sentence that appears in the finished manuscript, has the writer violated the spirit of the rule? If AI merely suggests ideas, organizes research, or catches awkward grammar, how is that fundamentally different from using Grammarly, a spelling checker, Google, or even a thesaurus?

Technology has always changed the way we work. Carpenters traded handsaws for power saws. Accountants replaced stubby pencils and ledgers with spreadsheets. Photographers exchanged darkrooms for Photoshop. Yet no one claims those tools deserve the credit for the finished work.

The same distinction applies to writing.

AI should not be the ghostwriter. The writer still provides the destination, the judgment, the experience, and, above all, the imagination. Used responsibly, AI doesn't replace writers. It helps good writers spend less time on drudgery and more time doing what only human beings can do: think, create, persuade, and tell stories worth reading.

Here are ten ways writers can use AI without surrendering authorship.

AI Before you write

AI helps you think not write. Before the first sentence emerges, AI can help sharpen your thoughts and overcome the fear of the blank page.

1. Brainstorming Is AI's Greatest Strength.

Instead of staring at a blank, white screen with a blinking cursor, the writer can ask AI:

- Give me ten possible openings.
- What objections might readers have to the argument or point of view I wish to present?
- Are there any stories or anecdotes that could illustrate the arguments I plan on presenting?
- What questions should I answer in my presentation?
- Am I overlooking any details?

Note that AI isn't replacing creativity. It is provoking creativity.

2. AI Can play Devil's Advocate.

This may be one of AI's most underused features. Just prompt, "Argue against my position" or "What weaknesses do you see?"

AI can anticipate and point out those weaknesses and objections before readers raise them.

3. AI is an Idea Expander.

Suppose you jot down the idea, "Getting over yourself means focusing on the reader instead of yourself." This could prompt AI to suggest exploring such approaches as:

- Fear of criticism
- Perfectionism
- False start
- Audience expectations
- Rewriting
- Publication

AI During Research

AI can help the writer gather information, but it does not replace judgment.

4. AI is a Research Gateway.

AI does not replace Google, but it often serves as the first stop for curating all that research as the first stop for gathering information. For example, use AI to:

- Explain unfamiliar topics in plain English
- Summarize historical and current events inspiring deeper research.
- Find alternative terminology, especially when some fact is “on the tip of your tongue.”
- Find and compare competing viewpoints—minus the white noise of bias.
- Suggest follow-up questions and approaches the writer hasn’t considered

So, AI, unlike a traditional search engine can synthesize curated information without having to open twenty search window tabs. AI is an excellent starting point, but not the final authority. Important facts always deserve verification from reliable sources—which AI can look up and present as well.

5. AI Is an Excellent Research Assistant

Why waste time in circular searches looking for avenues to explore when AI can quickly point you toward focused, worthwhile research in areas such as:

- Statistics
- Biographies
- Historical timelines
- Terminology
- Notable quotations
- Definitions
- Related topics

Let AI do the research for reputable resources to add credibility to your writing.

6. AI is an Outline Builder

Know what you want to say, but struggle with organization? AI can suggest outline structures like:

- Chronological
- Problem/solution
- Compare/contrast
- Question-and-answer
- Numbered steps
- Narrative followed by analysis

The writer decides which outline best serves the reader and proceeds from there. An outline is the writing prompt that organizes everything. Your outline is the bridge between research and writing.

AI During Revision

AI helps to add luster and polish to what only you can write.

7. AI Can Test Your Audience

AI can evaluate your writing from the perspective of different levels, or types of readers, from beginners to experts, or simply general audiences. Matching your writing to the needs of your target audience makes your writing marketable.

8. AI Is a Faithful Editing Assistant

AI can be the capable first editor. Rely on AI to identify grammar, awkward wording, repetition, poor transitions, and readability issues. All this assistance leaves the author's creative voice intact, while sprucing up the writer's craft.

9. AI Is a Handy Title Generator

Do you spend more time on the title than the article? AI can come up with dozens of possibilities for your writing in seconds. For this article, AI suggested the following:

- Writing With AI, Not by AI
- The Case of an AI Writing Partner
- Meet my New Writing Assistant
- The Myth of the AI Writer

The Real Payoff

10. AI Is a Productivity Multiplier

Reduce hours of research, brainstorming, and editorial work to minutes and devote more time and energy to the creativity that only human intelligence can provide.

Conclusion

To me, writing has always involved both inspiration and craftsmanship. Artificial intelligence can lighten the craftsmanship load, but it cannot supply the inspiration. It can organize ideas, locate information, suggest improvements, and polish prose, but it cannot replace the life experience, judgment, curiosity, and imagination that give writing its value.

That's why I don't fear AI, nor do I worship it.

I use it the same way a carpenter uses a power saw or a photographer uses Photoshop: as a tool that makes me more productive without pretending to be the craftsman.

AI sits beside me in the cockpit. It checks instruments, suggests alternate routes, and helps me avoid turbulence. But when it's time to choose the destination, take off, and land the airplane, I'm still the one holding the controls.

AI is my co-pilot—not my ghostwriter.