

When Not to Use AI

Naming the work that belongs to people, before a deadline makes the decision for you.

Deciding what to automate is easy when you are calm and expensive when you are late. So decide now, in writing, before the pressure arrives.

Start with relationships. Anything that carries your voice into a real relationship should come from you. I learned that the hard way on an outreach email to a school district. I had six drafts from AI, all competent, all slightly hollow. I wrote the final one myself in eight lines, and it was the one that got a reply. The tool was still useful. It caught a missing letter in the link that would have broken the whole thing.

Do not use AI where you cannot verify the claim. If a number, a legal statement, or a date is going in front of a customer or a board, someone has to be able to point to the source. Fluent writing is not evidence, and a confident paragraph is the easiest thing in the world to produce.

Do not use it on data you do not have the right to use. Other people's confidential material, customer records you do not own, anything covered by an agreement you did not read. The convenience is not worth the letter.

Do not use it for decisions that need a name attached. Hiring, firing, discipline, pricing that affects someone's livelihood, and any apology. Those require a person who can be asked why and who has to live with the answer.

And be careful with anything that touches a child, a patient, or a person in trouble. Not because the tool is malicious, but because the cost of a plausible mistake is paid by someone who did not choose to be in the experiment.

None of this is a reason to slow down elsewhere. It is what lets you go fast everywhere else with a clear conscience. Write your list. Share it with your team. Revisit it when the tools get better, not when a deadline makes the argument for you.

The rule: if being wrong costs trust rather than time, a person does the work.