

AI on Your Terms

Practical Help, Human Judgment

By William Paul “Bill” Herald · wphc.us

AI can help you do more. You still make the call.

You do not need to become a programmer to try AI. Start with a small piece of work you understand: organizing your thoughts, making a draft clearer, or asking for an explanation of something you are reading. Give yourself a way to judge whether the result helped.

This guide builds on the lesson [AI Can Help You Do More. You Still Make the Call](#). The approach is simple: **ask, examine, choose, then check the result**. These steps give you a place to start. They do not guarantee that an answer is correct or a task will be quick.

1. Choose one useful task

Pick something small enough to inspect yourself. You might ask for a clearer version of a paragraph you wrote, a checklist from your own nonconfidential notes, or questions to help you understand a public document.

Decide what a useful result would look like before you ask. “Help me with everything” leaves a lot for the tool to guess. “Turn these notes into a five-item checklist without adding new facts” gives you something concrete to review.

Try this exercise: Write one sentence beginning, “At the end, I want...” Then name one thing the result must preserve. That might be your meaning, a date, or the distinction between a confirmed fact and an open question.

2. Ask for the help you want

Tell the tool the task, the audience, the material it should use, and the form you want back. Include the limits that matter. You can ask for a draft without authorizing anyone or anything to send it.

Prompt to adapt:

Help me turn the notes below into a short checklist for my own use. Use only these notes. Preserve any dates exactly. Put missing information under “Questions to resolve” instead of filling it in. Give me a draft to review; do not take any action.

Replace the task and limits with your own. Use information you are comfortable sharing with the service you choose.

If the first answer misses the point, identify the specific problem: “You added a deadline that was not in my notes. Remove it and show what is still unknown.” A focused correction gives you a clear change to check. You can also stop and do the task yourself.

3. Examine the answer and its sources

Read the answer beside your original request and material. Did it answer the question? Did it leave out a condition, change a number, or add a claim? Clear writing is useful, but it is not evidence that the content is right.

When factual sources matter, ask for links that support the particular claims. Then do the checking:

- Open the source and find the relevant passage.
- Compare what the passage says with the claim in the answer.
- Check the date when the information may have changed.
- Keep unsupported details marked as uncertain, or remove them.

For example, if you are checking a public event date, look at the organizer’s announcement and confirm which year it describes. A link to the organizer’s home page alone may not establish the date.

If a link does not open or you cannot find the supporting passage, you still have an unresolved question. Asking AI whether it is sure is not a substitute for finding support.

Try this exercise: Select one factual claim from an answer. Write down the claim, its source, and the passage you found. Does the passage support the whole claim, only part of it, or none of it?

4. Make the choice yourself

Keep what helps. Change what misses your purpose. Reject what you cannot stand behind. You do not owe the tool agreement.

For writing, read the draft aloud. Does it mean what you intended? Does it sound like something you would say? Could you explain the claims to the person receiving it? A smoother sentence can still need correction.

If you are comparing options, name your priorities first. An answer can help organize differences, but the importance of cost, convenience, privacy, or personal preference comes from your situation.

Try this exercise: Mark one part “keep,” one “change,” and anything unsupported “check.” If the entire answer needs replacing, say so. An honest rejection is a useful decision.

5. Keep information and actions under control

Use a first task that does not require private family records, confidential work documents, passwords, or payment details. If the task belongs to your employer or another person, establish what you are allowed to share before uploading it.

Read the service's current privacy information and available settings before using sensitive material. Do not assume every service handles information the same way. Removing a name may still leave details that identify someone. When you are unsure, choose a different input or ask the responsible person.

Some AI tools can connect to files, email, or other services. Before enabling a connection, check what it can read and change. Use the narrowest access that serves your task, and understand how to stop or disconnect it. A sentence asking the AI not to act does not replace the tool's permission settings.

Before a send, publication, purchase, or file change, inspect the actual content and destination. Decide whether to authorize that specific action. If the tool does not make the action clear, pause.

6. Check the result and learn from it

Return to your opening sentence: "At the end, I want..." Compare the finished work with that purpose. Look again at the facts you needed to preserve.

If an action occurred, inspect the result in the relevant place: the saved document, the sent message, or the published page. A completion message tells you what the tool reports; examining the result tells you what is there.

Keep a short note about what helped, what you corrected, and what you will do differently next time. Count your asking, checking, and correction time if you want to judge whether the approach is worthwhile. One useful result is a reason to try another small task, not proof that every task will work equally well.

Your next small task

Use the [One Useful AI Task worksheet](#) to plan one attempt and review it. The printable worksheet has no online form; write your answers on paper or in your own notes.

Write down your task, examine the answer, make your choice, and check the result. Leave yourself permission to stop, narrow the task, or finish it another way.

Follow the lessons and work at wphc.us.

AI can help you do more. You still make the call.