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# AI Writing Tells to Avoid

Your editing cheat sheet



AI uses the same words, phrases and sentence patterns repeatedly. Here are the most common tells and what to do about them.

# AI Crutch Words and Phrases

If content seems AI-generated but you can't pinpoint why, these words and phrases often reveal the problem. AI relies on them because they fit almost any topic, industry or audience. The result is generic, repetitive content.



## Words and phrases to avoid:

Actual / actually	Around	Carry / carries / carrying
Center / centers / centered / centering	Deepen / deepens / deepening	Drives / driving
Framework / frameworks	Genuine / genuinely	Matter / matters
Narrows / narrowing	Navigate / navigating	Over time
Real / really	Reinforce / reinforces / reinforcing	Shape / shapes / shaping
Shift / shifts / shifted / shifting	Sits with / sits on	Strengthen / strengthens / strengthened / strengthening
Surface / surfaces / surfaced / surfacing	Underscore / underscores / underscoring	Unlock / unlocks

## Avoid ❌

- The shift toward AI-driven content is reshaping how teams work.
- Many B2B companies build trust with buyers over time by publishing valuable content consistently.
- Marketing teams need frameworks that guide content planning and execution.

# What to do instead

Replace AI crutch words and phrases with more specific language or rewrite the content so it doesn't need them.

- AI is changing how content teams work.
- Many B2B companies build trust with buyers by publishing valuable content consistently.
- Marketing teams need a clear process for content planning and execution.

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# Contrast Statements

AI loves “It’s this, not that” sentences. Once you spot this pattern, you’ll see it everywhere in AI-generated content. AI uses it to make points sound persuasive.



## **Pattern 1: Positive/negative construction (X, not Y)**

The point is stated first, then immediately undercut with a contrast:

- It’s a strategy, not a tactic.
- This is a people problem, not a technology problem.
- It’s a leadership issue, not a budget issue.



## **Pattern 2: Negative/positive construction (Not X. It’s Y)**

The point is withheld until the second sentence, creating false drama:

- It’s not a strategy. It’s a tactic.
- This isn’t a technology problem. It’s a people problem.
- It’s not a budget issue. It’s a leadership issue.

## Avoid ❌

- This isn't about your traffic. It's about conversion.
- It's not a content problem. It's an execution problem.
- This isn't a sales issue. It's a messaging issue.

# What to do instead

State the idea directly. If the contrast matters, readers will see it without the AI pattern.

- Focus on conversion before investing in more traffic.
- The content is solid. The challenge is execution.
- Sales conversations reveal a messaging problem.

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# Short, Stacked Sentences

AI defaults to short sentences.  
String enough of them together  
and the rhythm becomes a tell.  
When every sentence lands with  
the same weight, nothing stands  
out.

## Avoid ❌

- AI is changing marketing. Brands are adapting. The ones that get it right will win.
- The data is in. Buyers have changed. They do their research. They don't want to talk to sales. They already know what they want.
- The campaign launched. Results came in. The team was thrilled.

# What to do instead

Vary your sentence lengths. Combine related thoughts so the rhythm isn't repetitive and important points have room to land.

- Brands that figure out how to use AI without losing their voice will stand out from the competition.
- Today's buyers complete most of their research before they engage with sales, and by the time they reach out, they've usually made up their minds.
- When the campaign results came in ahead of projections, the team finally had the proof it had been building toward.

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# Em Dash Overuse

AI uses em dashes to add drama and connect ideas. Use them sparingly or they'll start to feel mechanical.

## Avoid ❌

- Marketing leaders face difficult decisions — ones that affect every department.
- The research points in one direction — buyers trust expertise more than promotion.
- The company expanded rapidly — creating new operational challenges along the way.

# What to do instead

Write the idea directly, without the setup-and-reveal structure the dash creates. Remove the dash and combine the ideas into one clean sentence.

- Marketing leaders face decisions that affect every department.
- Buyers trust expertise more than promotion, according to the research.
- Rapid growth created new operational challenges.

# Filler Adjectives and B2B Jargon

AI loves adjectives that sound important. B2B marketing has used many of these for years, but AI has flooded the zone with them.

## ✘ Words and phrases to cut or replace:

<b>Agile</b>	<b>At scale</b>	<b>Bespoke</b>	<b>Best-in-class</b>
<b>Best-of-breed</b>	<b>Comprehensive</b>	<b>Cutting-edge [solution]</b>	<b>Ecosystem</b>
<b>Game-changing</b>	<b>Impactful</b>	<b>Industry-leading</b>	<b>Innovative</b>
<b>Leading</b>	<b>Learnings</b>	<b>Leverage</b>	<b>Powerful</b>
<b>Robust</b>	<b>Space (as in “we play in the X space”)</b>	<b>Strategic (as a modifier)</b>	<b>Synergies</b>
<b>Transformative</b>	<b>Unprecedented</b>	<b>Value-add</b>	<b>World-class</b>

## Avoid ❌

- Our agile marketing team adapts quickly to changing customer needs.
- Our robust, comprehensive marketing platform drives transformative results.
- We leverage content for game-changing increases in demo requests.

# What to do instead

If you call something powerful, prove it by citing the number or outcome. If you describe something as innovative, say what it does that didn't exist before. Cut the adjective and let the noun or verb do the work.

- Last quarter, our marketing team revised six campaigns after customer feedback revealed a new buying concern.
- Our marketing software reduced client onboarding time from three weeks to four days.
- We create content that increases demo requests by 28% in six months.

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# Platitude Closers

AI ends pieces with a conclusion that sounds motivating but says nothing. These are the written equivalent of a weak handshake.

**Avoid:** ❌

- The time to act is now. Marketing teams that embrace change will lead the way.
- The future belongs to those who embrace change and lead with purpose.
- Organizations that get this right will lead. Those that don't will be left behind.

# What to do instead

Replace vague predictions with a specific action, a concrete implication or a clear observation.

- The marketing teams getting this right are building a feedback loop between what they publish and what their audience remembers. That's worth exploring before the next content calendar.
- Three of your competitors launched thought leadership programs in the last six months. Whether that's a threat or an opening depends on what you do next.
- The brands your buyers trust most right now didn't get there by accident. Pull three pieces of their content and see what they're doing that you're not.

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# The Sameness Test

Remove your company name and logo from a piece of content, then show it to someone in your industry. Ask them:

- Could three competitors publish this unchanged?
- Does this sound like firsthand experience?
- Would someone recognize our company's perspective?

If they can't tell it's yours, your content may sound more like the market than your company.

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# Would Your Audience Know It Was You?

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