

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Editing AI Drafts So They Actually Sound Like You

*A checklist for the 30-45 minutes that turn a competent
AI draft into something only you could have written.*

INTRODUCTION

A Draft Is a Starting Point, Not a Finish Line

The fastest way to spot AI-assisted writing that shipped without editing isn't a single obvious tell, it's an accumulation of small ones: a phrase that shows up in a thousand other posts, a conclusion with no specific example under it, a rhythm that never varies. None of it is wrong exactly. It's just generic, and generic is the one thing a first AI draft almost always is, because it's trained to sound broadly good for anyone, not specifically like you.

The fix isn't avoiding AI drafts. It's budgeting a fixed, short editing pass, roughly 30 to 45 minutes per 1,000 words, that does 2 things a model can't do for itself: strip out the phrases that read as generic, and add back the specific detail only you have. This guide is that checklist.

SECTION 1

The Generic-Phrase Cut List

These phrases aren't wrong, they're just so overused across AI-assisted writing that they now read as a tell on their own. Search for them specifically in every draft before it goes out.

CUT OR REPLACE ON SIGHT

Opening throat-clears. "In today's fast-paced world," "In the ever-evolving landscape of..." Delete the whole sentence. Start with the actual point instead.

Empty transition phrases. "It's important to note that," "That being said," "At the end of the day." These add length without adding meaning, cut them and the sentence usually reads stronger.

Inflated verbs. "Delve into," "unlock the power of," "unleash," "elevate." Replace with the plain verb: look at, use, improve.

The false triad. "Not just X, but Y" and "It's not about A, it's about B" show up so often in AI drafts they've become a genre unto themselves. Fine used once in a whole piece, a tell when used twice.

The closer that isn't a closer. "The choice is yours," "Only time will tell," "And that makes all the difference." Replace with an actual, specific final thought, or cut the sentence entirely.

SECTION 2

The 30-45 Minute Editing Routine

Once the generic phrasing is gone, the draft is clean but still could be anyone's. This is where the remaining time goes: adding back what only you know.

THE ROUTINE, IN ORDER

OBJECTIVE First pass (10 min): read once straight through, no editing, just flag every sentence that feels generic or that you wouldn't actually say out loud.

METRIC Second pass (15-20 min): for each flagged sentence, either cut it or replace it with a specific detail, a real number, a real client situation, an actual opinion you hold.

BOUNDARY Third pass (10-15 min): read the whole thing aloud. Anywhere you stumble or it doesn't sound like your own speech, rewrite that line by hand.

The read-aloud step catches what silent reading misses almost every time: rhythm that's slightly off, a sentence too long to say in one breath, a word you'd never actually use in conversation. It's the single highest-leverage 10 minutes in the whole routine.

PROMPT • FLAG GENERIC PHRASING

Here's a draft: [paste]. Highlight every phrase that's a common AI-writing pattern, generic transitions, inflated verbs, hedge-everything conclusions, and suggest what specific detail or opinion could replace each one. Don't rewrite it for me, just flag it.

Asking it not to rewrite matters, the specific detail has to come from you, that's the part a model genuinely can't supply on its own.

*A first AI draft is a floor, not a ceiling.
30 to 45 minutes of deliberate editing is what turns competent into recognizably yours.
That's a small enough cost to pay on every single piece you publish.*

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