

A.I. Guidelines *for* Ghostwriting

Best practices for
collaborative writers
and their clients

v1.0 Created 8 April 2026



THIS DOCUMENT IS SHARED UNDER A CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION 4.0 INTERNATIONAL DEED.

Introduction

Artificial intelligence is transforming the publishing landscape on a daily basis. And because so much first-rate nonfiction is created in collaboration with a professional writer, this revolution presents many serious, specific challenges for ghostwriters and other writers for hire.

To help our profession address these issues, a group of leading practitioners came together to develop consensus on the following set of straightforward guidelines, to establish a common baseline for the industry.

GOALS

- Provide clear guidance for professional writers as we adapt to and navigate the challenges created by AI and large language models (LLMs).
- Guide communications between professional writers and our clients regarding how they use AI.

AUDIENCE

- “Writers” or “ghostwriters”: writers or editors working for hire on books or other content
- “Clients” or “authors”: the people or organizations that hire them.

Statement of Principles

- **Writing is a fundamentally human activity.** Its goal is to communicate meaning from writers to readers.
- **Human-created writing has desirable qualities that AI-created writing lacks.** These include originality, taste, and wit.
- **Human-created writing is labor intensive.** AI-powered tools can improve the efficiency of many activities involved in writing, from brainstorming and research to grammar checks and organization of references and citations.
- **AI is a tool.** Writers and their clients need guidelines because AI tools can be used in both constructive and destructive ways.
- **Writers and their clients need a mutual understanding about the use of AI.** This includes the tasks, purposes, and tools they will be using, including AI tools.
- **Publishers often have requirements regarding writers' use of AI.** Those guidelines vary among publishers. To manage the requirements for a document's ultimate publisher, a writer and their client need a shared understanding.
- **Wholly AI-generated text has copyright limitations.** The United States Copyright Office [has ruled](#) that material generated entirely by AI without human authorship is not protected by copyright.
- **Technology is not a substitute for trust.** AI detection tools are often inaccurate. Technology cannot replace a shared understanding between writers and clients.
- **Writers and their clients are jointly responsible for the quality and accuracy of what they write.** AI tools are not dependable for identifying or checking facts.

Recommended Disclosures

All writers for hire, including book ghostwriters, should disclose the nature of their AI use to clients and publishers. Doing so creates mutual understanding, which benefits everyone in the publishing ecosystem.

Writers should use the list that follows as a guide for disclosing the specific ways they use AI. The AI uses in this list are roughly ordered from least to most likely to raise clients' objections.

Precision is necessary here. Writers cannot comply with a directive like “Do not use AI at all,” because essential tools including grammar checkers and web searches incorporate AI. Writers and their clients should precisely document which categories of AI use are part of their work.

Given the speed of technology evolution and the creativity of writers, this list cannot be comprehensive. Writers should document and disclose any AI uses beyond those listed on the following page:

UTILITARIAN AND ADMINISTRATIVE USES:

- Transcribing audio interviews
- Checking spelling and grammar
- Cleaning up formatting or citations
- Assessing reading level
- Reviewing text to identify inconsistencies, redundancies, and other flaws
- Other utilitarian and administrative tasks (specify)

RESEARCH, ANALYSIS, AND COLLABORATION:

- Performing AI-augmented web search
- Producing extensive research reports
- Summarizing papers or other content for research purposes
- Summarizing of audio recordings
- Suggesting words or appropriate terminology (as a thesaurus)
- Using AI tools as thought partners in discovery, ideation, and brainstorming
- Compiling and querying repositories of relevant content
- Other research, analysis, and collaboration tasks (specify)

GENERATIVE USES:

- Suggesting titles and headings
- Generating outlines
- Suggesting ways to reorganize text
- Generating initial drafts of text content that will be revised later
- Generating initial drafts of graphics
- Generating text that will not be revised further (this is not recommended, due to copyright risk)
- Other generative uses (specify)

Understanding & Managing AI Risks

The use of AI carries serious professional and legal risks for writing professionals, including not only risks that are now well understood but also others that are still coming into focus. To protect their interests, both writers and their clients must be prepared to address these challenges. Publishers have also begun to impose their own requirements to maintain quality and avoid liability. These are the potential risks that writers and clients should be prepared to address:

- **Copyright risk.** AI-generated text and graphics may be ineligible for copyright protection. As a result, writers should avoid using AI to generate final text or graphics intended for publication.
- **Training risk.** By default, material submitted or uploaded to public LLM models can be used to train those models, potentially violating clients' confidentiality or IP rights. Writers uploading any work product to generative AI tools should take steps to prevent such materials from being used for training. (Most AI tools include a checkbox to limit use of uploaded materials for training purposes, but it's not completely clear in what ways AI companies will interpret this setting in the future. Professional or "team" versions typically keep copies locally and do not use them for training public models.)
- **Plagiarism risk.** LLMs often generate material taken from other sources without attribution. Writers should verify that any published material does not include uncited, plagiarized content.
- **Factual error risk.** AI tools can generate "hallucinations," which are information that appears to be factual but is actually incorrect or fabricated. Writers should ensure that any facts that they surface with AI tools are accurate and verified with reference to dependable original sources.
- **Risk of false quotations.** AI-generated audio transcripts contain errors. Material generated by LLMs can also misquote content from sources. Writers should verify quotes against the original audio or sources from which they are drawn.

Writers' core principles of integrity must remain, regardless of AI use. No matter how they generate content, writers and their clients are jointly responsible for ethical processes that protect the originality, accuracy, and legality of the work.

Client Responsibilities

Ghostwriting is a partnership. As a result, clients have the responsibility to disclose their use of AI to their ghostwriter. Ghostwriting collaborations work only when both the writers and their clients are transparent about the use of AI in content creation and other processes. Clients who hire writers should:

- disclose their use of AI to generate source material, because such source material may be subject to the same factual errors, risk of plagiarism, inaccurate quotes, and copyright limitations as material created by writers;
- negotiate with writers to define clear rules on AI use or nonuse; and
- share publishers' AI usage and disclosure requirements before work on the project begins.



How to Use This Document

Beyond helping ghostwriters maximize the opportunities and minimize the risks of using AI, this document is intended to clarify communication between writers and their clients. With that in mind, here's how writers and their clients can use it.

Writers and editors for hire should follow these guidelines:

- Attest that you agree with this document.
- Share this document with your client, noting your specific AI uses. Use it to negotiate a shared agreement on which uses of AI will and will not be permitted in a given project.
- Post the disclosures listed in this document on your website and acknowledge which specific AI uses apply to your work as a writer.

Clients who hire writers or editors:

- Use this document as a basis for discussions with writers and editors for hire, to clarify expectations for AI use in a project.

We explicitly permit agencies and publishers to adopt and share this document, provided they use it verbatim and acknowledge the source: "AI Guidelines for Ghostwriting."

If you wish to modify this statement for your own use, you must link to the original source and explain how you modified it.

This is an evolving document. We plan to update it as AI technologies and writers' and clients' needs evolve.

Disclaimer

This is not a legal document. If you want to embed any of the principles in this document into legal agreements, please consult a lawyer with IP and publishing experience.

Guideline Authors

This document was created by the Working Group on AI Guidelines for Ghostwriting, convened by Gotham Ghostwriters. The authors include:

- [Josh Bernoff](#), Author of *Writing without Bullshit* and the “AI & the Writing Profession” study
- [Lauren Hamlin](#), Co-founder of Splash Literary and Coauthor of the Move 37 newsletter
- [Michael E. Long](#), Author, Ghostwriter, and Georgetown University Writing Instructor
- [Kate Lee](#), Editor-in-Chief, Every, and former Head of Content, Medium
- [Lisa Rabasca Roepe](#), freelance journalist, former Board Member of the Association of Journalists and Authors
- [Alison Schwartz](#), President, Gotham Ghostwriters
- [Marcia Layton Turner](#), Founder, Association of Ghostwriters
- [Ben Whitford](#), Technology Journalist and Ghostwriter

The authors also wish to thank these reviewers for their feedback on the initial drafting of these guidelines. Note that the reviewers listed below are not responsible for the content of this document.

- [Naomi Haile](#), Chief Growth Officer, [WritersBlok](#)
- [David Murray](#), Executive Director, [Professional Speechwriters Association](#)
- [David Moldawer](#), Senior Literary Agent, [Writer’s House](#)
- [Madeleine Morel](#), President, [2M Communications](#)
- [Becka Oliver](#), Director of Talent, VP, [Kevin Anderson & Associates](#)
- [Robin Colucci](#) and [Michelle Rafter](#), [American Society of Journalists and Authors](#)

License

[CC BY 4.0](#) This document is shared under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Deed



THIS DOCUMENT IS SHARED UNDER A CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION 4.0 INTERNATIONAL DEED.