



When to Use AI (and when not to)

Outsource cognitive labor to AI without outsourcing accountability.

Current as of August 2026



Principle: Use AI to do the thinking work.
Humans **verify**, **decide**, and **own** the consequences.

1 USE AI FOR THESE TASKS

High leverage. Lower risk.
AI can do the work — you stay accountable.

Task type	Outsource to AI?	Examples
Transformation	Yes	Summarize, reformat, rewrite, translate, extract, categorize
First drafts	Yes	Emails, reports, SOPs, presentations, training content
Research assistance	Yes, with verification	Find sources, compare vendors, synthesize documents, identify themes
Data processing	Yes	Clean data, write formulas/code, classify records, create charts, analyze large datasets
Repetitive knowledge work	Yes	Meeting notes, status reports, documentation, recurring reports
Ideation	Yes	Brainstorm options, generate alternatives, challenge assumptions
Quality control	Yes, as a second set of eyes	Find inconsistencies, missing information, calculation errors, unclear wording
Decision preparation	Yes	Build decision matrices, summarize tradeoffs, model scenarios
Routine communication	Usually	Draft routine emails, FAQs, internal announcements, customer responses

VS.

2 DON'T USE AI FOR THESE TASKS

High risk. High consequence.
AI can assist, but should not decide.

Task type	Outsource to AI?	Examples / Why not
Expert judgment	No	AI can inform the expert; it shouldn't replace the expert
Final decisions with consequences	No	Hiring/firing, disciplinary action, promotions, major financial commitments
Legal/compliance determinations	No	Contract approval, regulatory interpretation, declaring compliance
Safety-critical decisions	No	Anything where an incorrect answer could cause injury or serious harm
Unverified factual claims	No	Don't publish AI-generated facts simply because they sound credible
Relationship-sensitive communication	Usually no	Layoffs, performance conversations, apologies, negotiations, sensitive customer issues
Accountability	Never	A person should remain responsible for the final work product
Confidential information in unapproved systems	Never	Trade secrets, customer data, employee data, unreleased products, credentials
Tasks AI cannot actually observe	No	Don't ask it to determine facts that require access to systems, people, or events it cannot see

3 A PRACTICAL RULE: ASK THESE THREE QUESTIONS EVERY TIME



1. What happens if it's wrong?

Low consequence → more autonomy.
High consequence → more human review.



2. Can the output be verified?

If a human can quickly check the answer against data, documents, calculations, or sources, AI is especially valuable. If verification is difficult, reliance should decrease.



3. Who owns the decision?

AI can do much of the work leading up to a decision. A human should own consequential decisions.



AI does the work. Humans **verify** the truth, exercise judgment, and **own** the consequences.



EXAMPLE

A 30-page vendor comparison can be heavily outsourced to AI. Having AI independently decide which vendor receives a \$2 million contract should not be.



REMEMBER

The dividing line isn't "tasks AI can do" vs. "tasks AI can't do." It's delegation of labor vs. delegation of responsibility.



Use AI as your force multiplier. Stay accountable for the outcome.

