

Useful Things to Try With AI at Work.

Practical, lower-risk ways to explore AI in your everyday work.

If you're new to AI, it can be difficult to know where to start.

You don't need to begin with anything complicated. Some of the most useful applications of AI are small, everyday tasks where it can help you get started, organise information or think something through.

Here are ten things worth trying.

1. Get past the blank page.

Sometimes starting is the hardest bit.

Give AI the purpose, audience and a few rough thoughts and ask it to suggest a structure or first draft.

Useful for things like:

- emails
- reports
- agendas
- briefings
- website copy
- internal updates

Try: Give it your rough thoughts first rather than simply asking, "Write me a report about X". You'll usually get something much closer to what you actually need.

2. Make sense of messy notes.

Paste in non-sensitive notes and ask AI to organise them into themes, questions, decisions and actions.

This can be particularly useful after meetings, brainstorming sessions or when you've been thinking about something for a while and have information scattered everywhere.

Watch out: Check that AI hasn't turned something you discussed into something you actually decided.

3. Break a big job into manageable steps.

Tell AI what you need to achieve, the deadline and any constraints.

Ask it to help you work backwards and identify:

- what needs doing
- what should happen first
- what depends on something else
- decisions you need to make
- what you might need from other people

You can then change the plan rather than having to create one from nothing.

4. Prepare for a meeting.

Give AI the purpose of the meeting, who's attending and what you need to achieve.

Ask it to help you identify:

- the important questions
- what information you need beforehand
- decisions that may be needed
- areas where people might disagree
- a sensible agenda

It can help you prepare. It can't predict what another person thinks or how they'll respond.

5. Make something easier to understand.

AI can be useful for translating complicated language into plain English.

You could try it with:

- internal guidance
- policies
- technical information
- lengthy explanations
- jargon-heavy drafts

Ask it to preserve important detail, uncertainty and warnings rather than simply making everything shorter.

And always check the simplified version against the original.

6. Improve something you've already written.

You don't have to ask AI to write for you.

Try giving it something you've written and asking:

- Where am I repeating myself?
- What's unclear?
- Where am I using jargon?
- What could be shorter?
- Is there anything a reader might misunderstand?

You can decide which suggestions to accept.

This is often a better way of protecting your own voice than asking AI to replace the whole thing.

7. Ask it to challenge your thinking.

AI doesn't just have to produce things.

Tell it about an idea you're considering and ask it to identify:

- assumptions you're making
- evidence you might be missing
- potential risks
- alternative explanations
- questions you haven't considered
- other approaches worth exploring

Tell it explicitly not to simply agree with you.

It won't replace good human challenge, but it can help you notice gaps before you take an idea to somebody else.

8. Look at something from another perspective.

Ask AI what questions different people might have about a piece of work.

For example:

What questions might a trustee ask about this proposal?

Or:

What might someone using this service find confusing about these instructions?

This can be useful for broadening your thinking.

But don't ask AI to tell you what a particular community thinks or use an invented AI persona instead of involving real people.

AI can generate questions for you to explore. It cannot provide lived experience.

9. Check whether a funding opportunity is worth pursuing.

Funding applications can take a lot of time, particularly for small organisations.

Give AI the funder's published eligibility criteria and guidance, alongside appropriate non-confidential information about your organisation or project, and ask it to compare the two.

Ask it to identify:

- criteria you clearly meet
- criteria you may not meet
- anything that's unclear or needs checking
- information or evidence you would need for an application
- any obvious reasons you may be ineligible

Then ask it to show you which part of the funder's guidance supports each conclusion, rather than simply giving you a yes or no.

This can help you decide whether an opportunity deserves a closer look before investing hours in an application.

Watch out: AI can't tell you whether a funder will award you a grant. Check its assessment against the original guidance yourself, particularly the eligibility criteria and deadline.

10. Ask for questions before asking for answers.

This is one of our favourites.

Instead of:

How should we improve this project?

Try:

Before suggesting solutions, ask me the questions you need to understand the problem properly.

Or ask AI to give you questions about:

- who is affected
- what evidence you have

- what you're assuming
- what isn't working
- what constraints exist
- what success would actually look like

Sometimes AI is more useful for helping you think about the problem than producing an instant solution.

Start small.

You don't need to introduce an organisation-wide AI system to find out whether AI is useful.

Choose a small, lower-risk task.

Try it.

Check the result.

Ask yourself whether it actually helped.

And if it didn't, don't use AI just because you can.

Before you start.

Whatever you're trying, remember:

- Don't put confidential, sensitive or personal information into an AI tool unless your organisation has approved the tool and you know the information can be used there.
- Check important information before you rely on it.
- Keep people involved where the work affects people.
- AI should support your judgement, not replace it.