ai4♥

FREE RESOURCE

How to keep AI from sounding like AI

A setup guide for nonprofit teams

Last updated: November 18, 2026 · Jason Brown

"Be authentic" gives AI too little direction. Give your AI tool the writing rules, word choices and examples your team uses.

2

halves of a brand guide: how you look and how you sound

6

parts in a writing guide: five sets of rules, plus samples

6

steps to set it up in the AI tool you already use

In this guide

01 What a brand guide is

02 The writing guide

03 How to add it to your AI tool

04 Before and after

05 Safety rules

06 Starter prompt

CC BY 4.0 · ai4love.ca/resources/ai-brand-guide

01 What a brand guide is

A brand guide is the document that keeps your organization recognizable. For AI, it needs two halves.

HALF ONE

How you look

Logo, colours, fonts and how to use them.

HALF TWO

How you sound

Tone, word choices, style rules and samples. This is the writing guide, and it is the half AI needs most.

Your guide gives AI specific rules and examples to follow. Use those same rules to review each draft.

What it does for you

Sets your rules once

You stop repeating them in every chat.

Keeps the team consistent

Everyone writes from the same source.

Makes problems fixable

Recurring corrections become shared writing rules.

02 The writing guide

The language half of your brand guide: one to two pages of writing rules, supported by three to five separate samples.

01. Tone rules	How you sound, written as rules a writer can follow.	"We write to one person." "We thank before we ask."
02. Who we're writing for	Keep one voice. Adjust tone and detail for the reader, purpose and sender. Add a few rules and an approved example for each audience.	"Volunteer reminder: role, date, location and time commitment first."
03. Words we use	Terms you always choose.	"Neighbours," not "clients."
04. Words we never use	Terms that sound wrong coming from you.	"Unprecedented," "unlock," "thrilled."
05. Style rules	Punctuation, length and formatting.	No em dashes. Paragraphs of three sentences or fewer.
06. Samples	Three to five pieces of your best writing, each labelled with its audience, purpose and sender.	A thank-you letter, an appeal, a social post.

> Turn tone descriptions into specific rules. "Warm and professional" leaves room for interpretation. "We thank before we ask" gives a writer a clear instruction.

03 How to add it to your AI tool

Six steps to save your writing guidance for repeated use.

	DO THIS	WHY
01. Put it in one document	Combine the brand guide and the writing guide as a PDF, Word file or plain text.	One file is easier to upload, share and keep current.
02. Give it a home	Create a project or agent, or set up a Gem or Skill.	The guide lives in one place. Find your tool's feature in the table below.
03. Paste in the rules	Copy the writing guide rules into its instructions.	Saved instructions reduce the need to repeat your writing rules.
04. Upload the files	Add the full brand guide and your writing samples as files.	The tool refers to them when it needs more detail.
05. Test it	Ask for a thank-you note and compare it with your samples.	You find the gaps before a supporter does.
06. Keep it alive	When you revise a rule, update the guide, the saved instructions and any uploaded copies. Test another draft.	Everyone works from the same updated guidance.

What each tool calls it

Tool	Feature	Where the guide goes
ChatGPT	Project	Project instructions and files
Claude	Project	Project instructions and project knowledge
Gemini	Gem or Skill, depending on your account	Instructions and uploaded files
Microsoft 365 Copilot	Agent, made in Agent Builder	Instructions and knowledge sources. Options depend on your licence.

As of November 2026. Google is moving personal accounts from Gems to Skills. Workspace nonprofit accounts are scheduled to follow in March 2027. Feature names change. The pattern stays the same: saved instructions plus reference files. For visual work, Claude supports reusable design systems on paid plans.

Three ways to use it

QUICK START

Paste it into the chat

Copy the writing guide in at the start of a conversation.

Works in any tool. You repeat it every time.

SET ONCE

Save it in your tool

Add it once to a project, agent, Gem or Skill.

Each chat that uses it starts with your guide.

WHOLE TEAM

Share it with your team

Give your team access to the same setup.

Everyone writes from one guide. Sharing options depend on your plan.

---

04 Before and after

The same request and brief, without and with a writing guide. Illustrative examples.

01 Thank-you email

Brief: Supporter funding helped expand the breakfast program to two additional schools this fall.

BEFORE

"We are thrilled to share that your generous support is unlocking brighter futures across our community!"

AFTER

"Because of you, the breakfast program opened at two more schools this fall. Thank you."

Rule behind the rewrite: Thank the supporter and name one concrete result.

02 Event post

Brief: Gala on March 6 with forty tables. Goal: a year of music lessons for 200 children. Tickets are on sale.

BEFORE

"Exciting news! Our annual gala is just around the corner. Don't miss this incredible evening of impact!"

AFTER

"The gala is March 6. Forty tables, one goal: a year of music lessons for 200 kids. Tickets are on sale."

Rule behind the rewrite: Lead with the date and the purpose. No hype words.

03 Appeal opening

Brief: Rent rose again this year, and more people are lining up at the food bank.

BEFORE

"In these unprecedented times, your support has never been more crucial to our mission."

AFTER

"Rent went up again this year. The line at our food bank grew longer."

Rule behind the rewrite: Never say "unprecedented." Start with what people can see.

> Add this rule to your writing guide: "Use only confirmed facts from the brief. Ask for missing details. Never invent dates, figures, outcomes or quotes."

CC BY 4.0 · ai4love.ca/resources/ai-brand-guide

05 Safety rules

Three rules to agree on before anyone uploads a document.

01 Decide what never goes in

Donor names, gift details and anything personal or confidential stay out.

02 Use approved tools

Check which AI tools your organization allows before uploading documents.

03 A person reviews everything

Before publishing or sending, a team member checks the facts, tone, names, dates and links.

06 Starter prompt

Copy this into your AI tool to draft your writing guide.

AI PROMPT

I want to build our writing guide so you can write the way our organization does.

Below are three to five pieces of our best writing, each labelled with its audience, purpose and sender. Read them, then:

1. Describe our tone as five to seven plain rules a new writer could follow. No vague adjectives.
2. List our recurring words and phrases. Suggest words to avoid, and ask me to confirm those choices.
3. Note our style habits: sentence length, punctuation, formatting, and how we open and close.
4. Ask which audiences we write for, who sends our messages and what those messages need to achieve. Then suggest rules for adapting tone and detail while keeping our organization's voice consistent.
5. Ask up to five questions about anything the samples don't show. Ask one at a time and wait for my answer.

After I answer, produce a one-page writing guide using the confirmed rules.

Leave any names or personal details from the samples out of the guide.

[Paste your writing samples here]

Fill in: three to five labelled writing samples, with donor names and personal details taken out first.

About and licence

Prepared by Jason Brown, founder of AI4Love, a relationship intelligence platform for Canadian nonprofits. Designed by Jason Brown Design.

Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 licence (CC BY 4.0). Copy, adapt, and share it inside your organization or sector network, with credit.

Sources for the tool table: OpenAI Help Center, Claude Help Center, Google, Microsoft Learn.

Questions or suggested additions: info@ai4love.ca