

Enduring thoughts

The death of writing

Written with Microsoft Copilot and a sprinkle of human intervention

AI-generated content may be incorrect

It's becoming harder to write anything. Not because we lack ideas. Not because we lack time. Not because we have outsourced our personalities to large language models trained on the entire internet. The problem is simpler. Every sentence now contains a potential sign of AI. We have become trapped in an endless game of literary Minesweeper. It started innocently enough. Someone posted a list of telltale AI phrases.

"Delve."

Fine. Most of us never liked delve.

"Journey."

Bit corporate, fair enough.

"Navigate a complex landscape."

Honestly, that one deserved prison time.

We adjusted accordingly. Then the lists grew longer. Apparently using "moreover" is AI. Being balanced is AI. Using headings is AI. Using bullet points is AI. Having good grammar is suspicious. At this rate, literacy itself will soon be considered machine-generated.

Backtests of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* have reportedly indicated AI content of 95% to 100%, which was awkward given the man died in 1870.

The entire industry is four compliance reviews away from communicating exclusively through grunts and charts.

Last week I spent 20 minutes writing a simple email. My first draft read:

"Thank you for your email. I have reviewed the documents and will revert shortly."

AI.

Second draft:

"Many thanks. I've reviewed the papers and will come back to you."

Potentially AI.

Third draft:

"Cheers."

Too brief. Possibly generated by a minimalist AI.

Fourth draft:

"Alright."

Suspiciously efficient.

Fifth draft:

[Deleted]

The only guaranteed human communication remains complete silence. The trouble is that the internet has developed an increasingly sophisticated AI detector.

The detector is called "vibes". It operates according to rigorous scientific principles. If a sentence sounds polished, it is AI. If a sentence sounds rough, it was AI that was edited. If a sentence is too long, AI wrote it. If a sentence is too short, AI rewrote it. If a sentence contains an em dash, definitely AI. If it contains no em dash, the AI probably removed them.

Remarkable technology.

I recently attempted to write a market commentary. The original version stated:

“Inflation remains above target and central banks are proceeding cautiously.”

A colleague said it sounded like ChatGPT.

I rewrote it.

“Inflation is still too high and central bankers are proceeding with all the enthusiasm of a cat approaching a bath.”

That was better.

Then somebody asked whether the cat metaphor had been generated by AI.

I am now considering a career in bricklaying.

Although even that seems risky. A wall with evenly spaced bricks feels exactly like the sort of thing AI would produce. A genuinely human wall should probably lean slightly to the left and contain at least one regrettable decision. The situation has become particularly difficult for anyone working in finance. Historically we relied on phrases such as:

- navigating uncertainty
- evolving market conditions
- diversified solutions
- robust processes
- long-term outcomes

Unfortunately, these now read like deleted scenes from a chatbot training manual. The entire industry is four compliance reviews away from communicating exclusively through grunts and charts.

My greatest fear is that genuine human habits are becoming suspicious. I enjoy structure. AI likes structure. I enjoy proper spelling. AI likes proper spelling. I like short sentences. So does AI. I occasionally use a semicolon. AI occasionally uses a semicolon.

At what point are we required to produce childhood photographs and witness testimony to prove authorship?

Soon every article will begin with a legally required declaration.

The author confirms that no algorithms were harmed in the production of this piece. The author manually experienced all opinions contained herein.

Maybe we require a breakdown of authorship:

Human-written	82%
AI-written	18%
Human after two coffees	94%
Human before two coffees	6%
Confidence level: <i>Vibes</i>	

Figure 1: Analysis of this article

Any use of logic, punctuation or coherent paragraph construction is entirely coincidental. Perhaps this ends in the only logical way. We return to the purest form of human expression. Typos. Half-finished thoughts. Unnecessary Capitalisation. Random tangents. The occasional sentence that goes nowhere because you started writing it before knowing how it would.

In fact, that may be the ultimate proof of humanity. Not elegance. Not originality. Not insight. Hang on, I've just been told by our marketing department you can't say "something is not this, it is that". Oops.

So in the end do we just need the unmistakable sense that somebody sat down and made it up as they went along.

Which, come to think of it, is how most of us have always been writing anyway.



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