



The Traffic Light Rule

What goes into ChatGPT, Copilot, Claude or Gemini at work, what gets stripped down first, and what never goes in. Print it. Tape it by the screen. Hand it to your team.

BEFORE YOU PASTE ANYTHING, ASK ONE QUESTION

Would I be comfortable if this showed up on a billboard, in a competitor's inbox, or read aloud in a courtroom?

- **Yes.** It is green. Go.
- **Only with the names taken out.** It is yellow. Strip it down.
- **No.** It is red. Stop.

GREEN

Go. Use it freely.

- **Anything already public:** your website, press releases, published standards and rules.
- **Brainstorming:** headlines, campaign angles, names, outlines.
- **Rewriting** rough notes that hold nothing sensitive, for tone, grammar or length.
- **Summarizing** public reports and articles.
- **Learning:** "Explain this like I'm new to it."
- **Formatting:** a messy list into a table, a template, an outline.

This is most of the work. It is where AI earns its keep.

YELLOW

Slow down. Strip it first.

- **Customer emails** and complaints.
- **Meeting notes** and internal summaries.
- **Incident and near-miss** write-ups.
- **SOPs and procedures** that carry real part numbers or customer specs.
- **HR topics** in general terms: a review framework, never a review of a named person.
- **Donor letters**, sales follow-ups, anything written to one real person.

Give AI the shape of the task. Add the names, numbers and specifics yourself, after.

RED

Stop. Never paste this.

- **Personal identifiers:** Social Security, license and passport numbers, birth dates, home addresses.
- **Money:** bank, card and routing numbers, tax IDs, non-public financials.
- **Secrets:** passwords, API keys, login codes.
- **Company crown jewels:** customer lists, source code, unsigned contracts, trade secrets.
- **Health:** medical, injury and drug test details.
- **Legal:** attorney-client material, HR investigations, anything under NDA.

Not even on the business version, unless a signed agreement clears it.

Stripping it down looks like this

● RED-LIGHT PROMPT

"Draft a response to customer John Smith at Acme Corp who is upset about invoice 12345 for \$50,000."

● SAME JOB, STRIPPED DOWN

"Draft a professional, empathetic response to a customer frustrated about a billing error on a large invoice. Under 150 words."

Same output. None of the exposure. Write "a 40-person machine shop in Bay County," never "the Johnson Company on Maple Street."

Which account?

- **Free or personal account:** green only.
- **Company business or enterprise account:** green, plus yellow once it is stripped.
- **Red:** no account, ever, without a signed agreement.

Before you use the answer

- **Ask for the source.** Open it. Find the sentence.
- **Check it is current** and right for your state and your industry.
- **Check it matches** your actual job, machine or customer.
- **A named person signs off** before it goes out the door.

Lock down your account

- Turn off training on your data.
- Review what memory has stored.
- Delete old chats you are done with.
- Official app and site only. No "add AI" browser extensions.
- Turn on two-factor sign-in.



AI drafts. People decide.

Tim Bish · Understanding Your AI

Want your whole team trained on this?

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Free team readiness check: understandingyourai.org/questionnaire