

PROMPT ENGINEERING · 9 min read · October 10, 2026 · By Kelly Stratton

The Humanizer Prompt for ChatGPT and Claude, October 2026 Edition

The humanizer prompt everybody copied in 2025 bans words AI already quit. This one is rebuilt from 2026 measurements of what ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini write now: paste it once and your AI drafts read like you wrote them.

You write with AI, and you don't want it to sound like it. The humanizer prompt that went around last year told AI to drop the em dash, "delve," and "tapestry," and it worked until the models changed. The newest Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini dropped the em dash on their own, and the words that give them away now are ones the old prompt never mentions. This is the rebuilt version, from September and October 2026 measurements of what the three tools write far more often than people do. Paste it once, put your draft under it, and read what comes back out loud. It's right below.

IN A NUTSHELL

A humanizer prompt is a set of standing instructions you paste at the top of a chat that tells the AI how to write so the result reads like a person. This one has a SHOULD list, an AVOID list, and 74 banned words and shapes, all from what the newest models actually overuse.

WHAT YOU NEED

ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini, on any plan including the free ones. Nothing to install. One paste.

PART 1 The Humanizer Prompt, October 2026 Edition

Copy the whole box. Paste it at the top of a new chat, then paste your draft under it and send.

PROMPT

FOLLOW THIS WRITING STYLE (October 2026 edition). It is based on what AI models write far more often than people do, measured in September and October 2026.

SHOULD:

- Use clear, simple words. Use, not utilize. Help, not facilitate. Start, not commence.
- Use contractions: it's, don't, we've, can't, that's, didn't.
- Vary the sentence length on purpose. Follow a long sentence with a short one. Let some run past 30 words and some stop at 5.
- Write in first person where the text is mine, and say what I think: "I think," "I'd say," "I like."
- Use the everyday words people use when they talk: pretty, a bit, a lot of, definitely, going to, check out.
- Use parentheses for a quick aside now and then (like this).
- Ask a real question when one belongs. Use one exclamation point if the moment earns it.
- Name something specific: a year, a month, a place, a person, a number, or a real example from the text. If the text has none, ask me for one. Never invent one.
- Use "you" and "your" to talk to the reader.
- Use a short list when there really are three or more separate things.
- Start with the point. End when the point is made.
- Keep every fact, name, and number exactly as given.

AVOID:

- Announcing what you're about to cover, and summarizing what you just said at the end.
- Framing the topic as the new answer to an old way of doing things.
- The shapes "it's not X, it's Y," "not just X but Y," and "more than a X, it's a Y." Say the one thing you mean.
- Groups of three for the sake of three.
- Telling the reader that something matters, is important, or is worth noting. Show it instead.
- Em dashes. Use a period or a comma.
- Long words where a short one works, and nouns made out of verbs: utilization, implementation, optimization.
- Stacked hedges: "may potentially," "could perhaps."
- Every sentence landing at the same length.
- Warnings, notes, and explanations about the rewrite. Give me only the text.

- Markdown, asterisks, and headers unless I ask for them.

AVOID these words and phrases (each one is used far more by AI than by people in 2026):
this matters, why this matters, matters because, matters most, just as important, rather than,
rather than simply, rather than relying, not simply, is not simply, not merely, not
automatically, together these, taken together, the result is, a real difference, extends
beyond, adds another layer, what comes next, looking ahead, often called, in practice,
dependable, steady, thoughtful, genuine, meaningful, practical, clearer, quietly, reliable,
lasting, distinction, manageable, broader, straightforward, useful, central, furthermore,
ultimately, incredibly, massive, profound, immense, highly, deeply, heavily, crucial,
fundamentally, comprehensive, navigating, testament, remarkably, whether you are, we will
explore, the world of, the power of, delve, landscape, nuance, foster, realm, tapestry, game-
changer, unlock, elevate, leverage, seamless, robust, streamline, harness, in today's world, at
the end of the day, in conclusion.

IMPORTANT: Before you answer, read your draft once more and remove any em dash and any phrase
from the list above. Then list, in one line each, any sentence you weren't sure about, so I can
decide.

PART 2 Why Does It Say What It Says?

Every line in the prompt comes from one of three studies. Graphite, a marketing research firm, compared 10,000 articles written before ChatGPT existed with 90,000 AI versions of the same topics, then added Claude Opus 5.5 on October 1, 2026. The Economist ran 1.2 million words through ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Grok and compared them with its own writers. A third study measured the shape of 2,250 company blog posts against 11,250 AI copies. The prompt does three jobs, and every line in it belongs to one of them: it puts back the things people write and AI leaves out (contractions, an aside, a real date, a short sentence after a long one), it strips out the words that replaced the em dash ("this matters," "not simply," "rather than," and 71 more), and it breaks the shape detectors read (the preview up top, the recap at the end, the staircase sentence). The table below shows where each line came from. Read each row left to right: what the researchers measured, then the exact line in the prompt that answers it, then what changes in your draft.

What the research found	The line in the prompt, and what it does for you
People use exclamation points more than 100 times as often as any current model.	Use one exclamation point if the moment earns it. One real exclamation point reads as a person, because AI almost never produces one.
People put a quick aside in parentheses about 7.7 times per 1,000 words. AI, between 0.04 and 1.1.	Use parentheses for a quick aside now and then (like this). An aside is one of the clearest human marks in the data, and it costs nothing.
People write "it's" 108 times more often than ChatGPT and 1,942 times more often than Gemini.	Use contractions: it's, don't, we've, can't, that's, didn't. A missing contraction is the fastest tell on ChatGPT and Gemini. Putting them back removes it.
Human sentences average 27 words and swing from 5 to 70. AI sentences sit between 16 and 19, every time.	Follow a long sentence with a short one. Let some run past 30 words and some stop at 5. Same-length sentences are the shape detectors read. Varying them breaks the shape.
People mention a year about six times per 1,000 words. AI, about once.	Name something specific: a year, a month, a place, a person, a number. If the text has none, ask me for one. Never invent one. A real detail is the one thing no prompt can fake, so the prompt makes the AI ask you for it instead of making one up.

People say "I think," "pretty," "a bit," and "definitely" 19 to 182 times more often than AI.

Say what I think. Use the everyday words people use when they talk: pretty, a bit, a lot of, definitely.

Those words are on the SHOULD list because the data shows they are human, not sloppy.

AI posts announce their structure up front and restate it at the end. A September 2026 study caught them from that shape 97 percent of the time.

Start with the point. Don't announce what you're about to cover, and don't summarize what you just said at the end.

Cuts the preview and the recap, the two structural tells.

AI frames the topic as the modern answer to an old way of working.

Don't frame the topic as the new answer to an old way of doing things.

Removes the before-and-after frame AI reaches for on every subject.

"This matters" appears 116 times more often in Claude, "not simply" 157 times more in ChatGPT, "furthermore" 26 times more in Gemini. Graphite counted 2,548 tells in the new Claude alone.

Never use these words or phrases,

then the 74 most overused. These are the words that replaced the em dash. The 2025 prompt bans none of them.

AI defaults to "it's not X, it's Y" and "more than a X, it's a Y."

Say the one thing you mean.

Kills the staircase sentence that survived the em dash.

AI picks longer words and turns verbs into nouns: utilization, implementation.

Plain words over long ones: use, not utilize.

Shorter words are the single biggest reason human writing reads easier.

People use semicolons ten times more often than the new Claude does.

Nothing. The 2025 prompt banned semicolons; this one doesn't, because banning them makes writing sound more like AI.

Long chats drift back to the tells after a few replies.

Before you answer, read your draft once more and remove any em dash and any phrase from the list above.

Makes the AI check its own work every time.

So when a draft comes back and it reads like you, that's not luck. The contractions, the aside, the short sentence, and the real date are the human marks from the first half of the table. The missing "this matters" and "rather than" are the second half. If something still sounds off, Part 4 has the follow-ups that fix one sentence at a time. And if you want all 20 signs with the numbers for each tool, so you can spot them in anyone else's writing, they're in [20 New Signs AI Wrote It, Now That the Em Dash Is Gone](#).

PART 3 What Do the Tells Look Like Side by Side?

Both versions below were written by hand for this guide, so you can see the tells side by side. First, the way AI tends to say it:

Customer onboarding is not simply a checklist. It is a practical, dependable process that matters because it sets the tone for the entire relationship. Rather than relying on a single welcome email, a thoughtful sequence builds trust over time. Together, these steps make a real difference.

Count them: "not simply," "practical," "dependable," "matters because," "rather than relying," "thoughtful," "together these," "a real difference," no contractions, four sentences of nearly the same length, and nothing specific. Now the way a person says it:

We used to send one welcome email and hope. Last March we switched to three short ones over a week (the second is just a photo of the team), and the number of people who actually finished setup went from about half to almost all of them. I don't think it's the emails. I think it's that someone said hello twice!

A date, a parenthesis, a number, "I think," "it's," "don't," one exclamation point, and sentences that run 9, 38, 6, and 8 words. That's what the prompt is built to do.

PART 4 How Do You Use It Every Day?

Paste the prompt, paste your draft, send. Read what comes back out loud. Then use these follow-ups, one at a time, as needed:

- "Shorter. Cut a third without losing a fact."
- "Read it back as if you're telling a friend across a table, and change anything you wouldn't say out loud."
- "Which sentence still sounds like a robot? Fix only that one."
- "Here's a real detail to work in: [your example, your date, your place]."
- "Make the first sentence the point. Delete the warm-up."

If you'll use this often. Every one of the three tools has a place to save standing instructions so you don't paste them each time: ChatGPT calls it custom instructions, Claude puts it in a Project's instructions, and Gemini keeps it with the information it saves about you. Paste the prompt there once, and every chat starts with the tells already off.

The tell that it slipped. Long chats forget. If a reply comes back with "rather than" or "this matters" in it, the model has drifted off the instruction. Paste the prompt again at the top of a fresh message and send the draft with it. That resets it.

PART 5 What Can't the Prompt Do?

It changes the words. A September 2026 structure study caught AI 96 percent of the time even after the AI reworded its own work, because rewording leaves the shape: the preview, the recap, the same-length sentences, the missing details. The prompt attacks the shape too, but the strongest fix is the one line only you can write. Your example. Your date. Your opinion. Put one real thing in every piece and it stops reading like a template, because it isn't one anymore.

The date on this list. Tells change with every model version. The em dash was the big one until September 2026, and the lists in this guide are as of October 2026. If a new model lands and the banned words in Part 1 stop showing up in AI drafts, the words have moved again, and the human habits in Part 2 are what still hold.

FAQ Questions People Ask About Humanizer Prompts

Straight answers

What is a humanizer prompt?

It's a set of standing instructions you paste at the top of a chat that tells ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini how to write so the result reads like a person: use contractions, vary sentence length, name something specific, and leave out the words and shapes AI overuses. This one is built from 2026 measurements of what the newest models actually write.

Why doesn't the old humanizer prompt work anymore?

The 2025 prompts banned the em dash, "delve," and "tapestry," and the newest models dropped those on their own. Claude Opus 5.5 uses 99 percent fewer em dashes than the model before it. The tells moved to phrases like "this matters," "not simply," and "rather than," which the old prompts never mention.

Does the humanizer prompt work in ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini?

Yes. It's plain instructions, so it works in any of the three on any plan, including the free ones. Paste it at the top of a new chat, then paste your draft under it. Each tool also has a place to save it so it's on in every chat, listed in Part 4.

Can AI writing be made undetectable?

That's not the goal, and no prompt promises it. A September 2026 study caught AI blog posts 96 percent of the time from structure alone even after the AI reworded them. The prompt gets the words right and attacks the shape; the one thing that finishes the job is a real detail only you can add, like a date, a place, or an opinion.

What words should I tell AI not to use in 2026?

Start with the ones measured far above human rates: "this matters," "why this matters," "rather than," "not simply," "together these," "the result is," "dependable," "practical," "thoughtful," "furthermore," "ultimately," "incredibly," "massive," and "a testament to." The full list of 74 is inside the prompt in this guide.

How do I make ChatGPT write with contractions?

Tell it in the instructions, every time: "Use contractions: it's, don't, we've, can't, that's." ChatGPT's newest model writes "it's" about 100 times less often than a person unless you ask, and Gemini almost never does. The humanizer prompt includes that line, and the saved-instructions step in Part 4 keeps it on.

SOURCES Where This Comes From

- [Graphite, AI Tells: Opus 5.5 Update \(October 1, 2026\)](#), for the Claude Opus 5.5 em dash count, the 2,548 tells, and the "this matters" and "why _ matters" multipliers.
- [Graphite, AI Tells \(September 16, 2026\)](#), for the method, the ChatGPT-6 Astra and Gemini 3.1 Pro tells, and the human tells. Their measurements are published under CC BY 4.0; the banned list and the table in Part 2 are drawn from their downloadable data.
- [SlopShape: Identifying AI-Generated Commercial Web Content \(September 14, 2026\)](#), for the structure findings and the 96.1 detection figure after rewording.

- [The Economist's analysis, as reported August 4, 2026](#), for the 1.2-million-word comparison, the punctuation findings, and the long-word and nominalization findings.

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