

# When is it “okay” to Use AI in Writing: The Three Layers of AI-Augmentation

 [medium.com/@jamespresbiterojr/the-three-layers-of-ai-augmentation-71d8b25b8329](https://medium.com/@jamespresbiterojr/the-three-layers-of-ai-augmentation-71d8b25b8329)

Top highlight

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**My framework for the haters for appropriate use of AI in writing.**

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James Presbitero Jr.

Do you think using AI doesn't qualify as “real writing”? Does it feel like cheating?

Or maybe you don't feel as strongly. Maybe you recognize that AI might be useful in *some* situations. But which situations? And how useful?

Maybe you're even curious about what this can do (just a bit). But the information out there is overwhelming: with some saying AI is the dawn of a better age, while others decry it as the beginning of a great fall. Which is it?

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As a writer, and one who uses AI, I've become increasingly aware that most of the conversations around AI are centered around “Should I, or should I not?” And while I feel like the battle lines have been drawn on this one, the natural next question has been left unanswered:

“Assuming I want to use AI, how much AI is appropriate?”

You can infer incomplete answers from most relevant articles or forums. Typically, they would be:

- “Just don't use it too much”
- “Make sure to add a human touch” or
- “Make sure your authentic voice still stands out.”

But those aren't really practical answers, are they?

How much is “too much”? In what kinds of writing is it perfectly fine to use AI? To what degrees? Are there types of writing where any kind of AI use just wouldn't cut it?

More often than not, these questions are left for the individual to answer.

So, I've found my own answer — a framework that answers all these questions. It might help you, even if you hate the very thought of using AI. It might not.

Nevertheless, I have a long answer and a short answer.

My short answer is that how much you use AI depends on how personal the writing is to you. The more of yourself you put into your writing, the less room there is for AI to squeeze into.

My long answer is ... Well, long. It's below.

## The Three Layers of Augmentation

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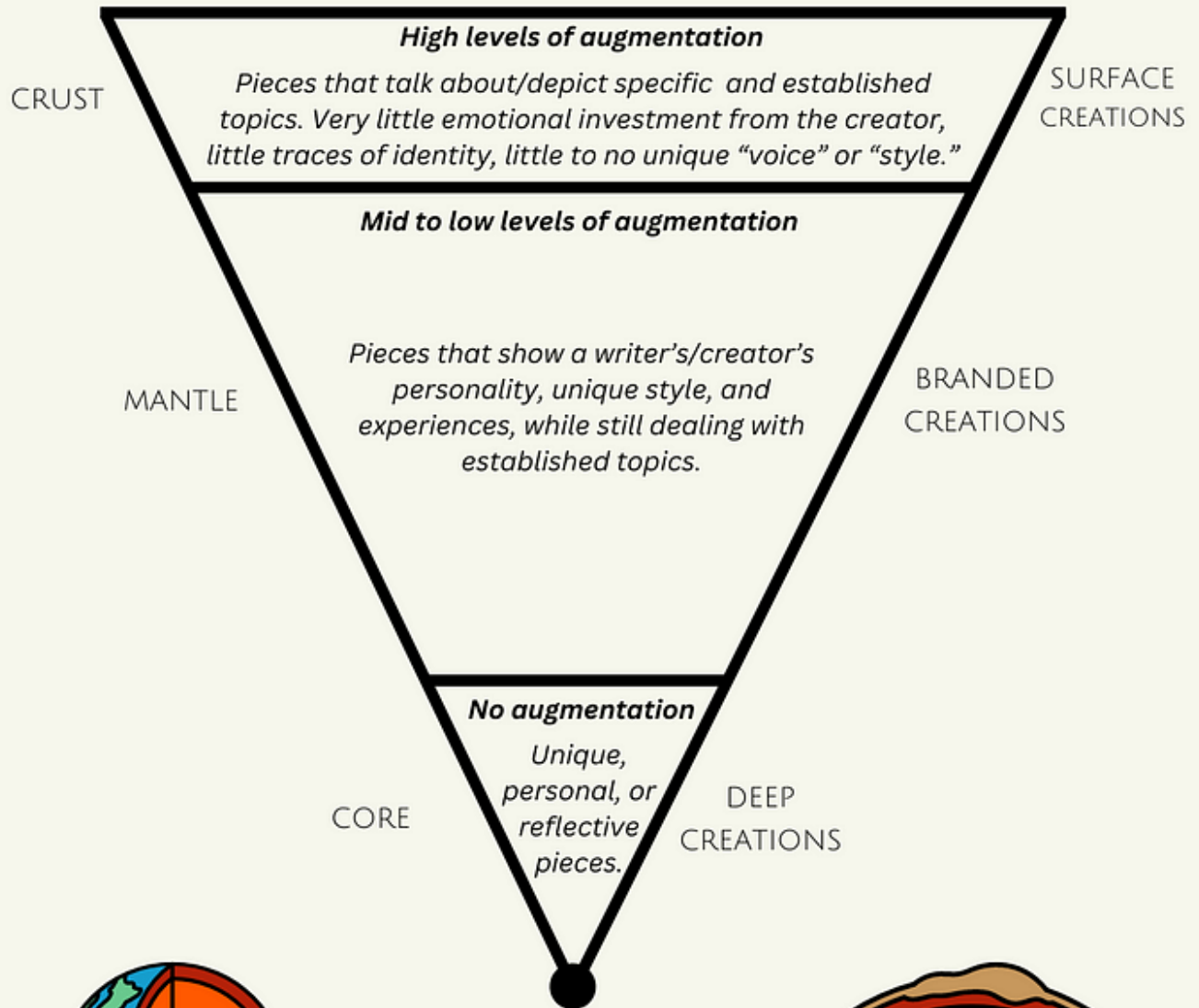
The Three Layers illustrates a framework for appropriate levels of AI use in writing (and, I feel, in any creative pursuits), taking into account the type of writing, your writing philosophy, and even your emotional investment.

But more than a framework, I think it also serves as an explanation. **It answers the question, when do people use AI? At what degrees?**

Before we dive in deeper, let's look at the Three Layers of Augmentation.

# The Three Layers of AI Augmentation

James A. Presbitero Jr.



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On the bottom-left corner is a picture of a planet, and on the bottom right is a cross-section of that said planet, with all its layers.

This is what I picture myself, and people, as. We are all planets.

## The Core: Deep Creations

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We are all planets. We have a core.

That core defines us, it makes us who we are. It is the “stuff we are made of.” It’s our highest values, our deepest wishes, our highest dreams. This core is not unchangeable, but it shifts very slowly, and only with great magnitude.

Our core holds everything else together.

In terms of writing, or any artistic creation, these are the writings we show only to ourselves, or at most to our closest loved ones, to our most loyal fans. If you are brave, you can show your core to the world, sure, but you do so at your own risk.

These will be truly unique creations that reveal our innermost thoughts, our most memorable experiences, and our biggest vulnerabilities. Think *Meditations*, by Marcus Aurelius.

For me, this is something like *My Top 3 Lessons for 6 Life Areas This 2023*. But not really. More like the journal entries no one knows about.

It’s impossible to use AI for these types of writing. **There is no room for AI at the core.** AI simply cannot replicate us. Even Grammarly feels wrong for these creations.

One more: **I think this is the perspective that people who hate AI write from.** Let me explain.

Let’s call them Core Writers. Core Writers talk about writing in terms of emotions. Writing, for them, is something almost sacred. Every part of the process is intimate, an extension of themselves. That is because they write from their cores.

Using AI corrupts the process, and by extension, corrupts themselves. AI is therefore not just unnecessary, but is an outright affront to them.

What are my opinions on Core Writers? I think they are what Nicholas Cole would call Legacy Writers. They write for themselves — and that can be a hit or miss.

After all, people have their wants, and they don’t necessarily want *you*. They want information, entertainment, and inspiration. If you can provide that, just by being yourself, then good for you.

But many people will try, and will not succeed.

## The Mantle: Branded Creations

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The next Layer up is the Mantle. It is still deep, therefore it still shows plenty of ourselves and our identities, but it is not exclusive to us anymore.

The Mantle is the parts of us we wish other people saw, recognized, and loved — just a layer deep from our outer shells, not too shallow, but not too deep.

In terms of writing, these are the things that define us in the wider world.

We make these to be introduced to other people — as a personality, as a professional, as a business. We make these types of content to own a niche, and to be recognized as an authority.

We balance our identities with good, compelling, and authentic writing. We use hooks to capture attention, hold it, and funnel it into something productive. We create stories.

For me, this article is an example of Mantle Writing, a form of Branded Creation.

This area is where AI can be used extensively, but still tastefully. Some possible AI-use in Branded Writing:

- Simplifying audience research.
- Looking for underserved titles and topics.
- Formulating and creating hooks, titles, and quotes.
- Enhancing readability by suggesting synonyms, idioms, etc.

One thing that AI can't be used for here is as a substitute for your writing. If you want to create a brand or have an authentic voice, simply copy-pasting something from ChatGPT, Bard (now Gemini apparently), or something just wouldn't work.

**I think this is the Layer where most people are excited about AI.** Writing, for Mantle Writers, is more like a means to an end. A process or system that you can modify, customize, or enhance according to your goals.

Thus, the process of using AI is like picking up a pen, using the internet, or asking for advice. Extremely useful, but not everything.

Note: Out of all the three layers, this is the part where I am most unsatisfied with the name “Branded Creations.” It just doesn't sound cool to me, doesn't have the same ring as “Core Writing.” I am a simple guy, I like cool names. Any thoughts? Lol.

## The Crust: Surface Creations

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The furthest layer from ourselves is the Crust. This is the part of ourselves that is the most malleable. Just as the elements change the face of the earth, so do our outer shells change depending on external situations.

These are the types of writing that we create but don't necessarily represent us. We need quality, and we need speed, but in these creations, we typically don't need personality, authenticity, or voice. At least, not our own.

If you are a freelance writer or in-house writer, these can be the things you make for your clients or company. Articles that reflect the brand's tone of voice, are well-researched, and — perhaps most importantly — quick.

If you are working professionally, surface creations are often things like emails, reports, and all other correspondence that make up bureaucracies.

For this, most people are fine with using AI for every part of the writing process. **At your own risk, of course.**

Typically, I still wouldn't recommend simply copy-pasting content from AI models. At the very least, would recommend that you at least remove obvious words and giveaways — but for some use cases, you might not even need to.

I think there's nothing wrong with this. Everyone can create Surface Writing — and indeed modern life might even demand Surface Creations for specific scenarios. It's all up to you.

But of course, you can take it too far.

**There are people who exclusively dwell in this area.** These are the people who believe they are good writers, just because they can regurgitate information from an LLM. Fortunately, I think the invisible hand of the market will swat their content down.

Their work just isn't ... good. They are one-in-many, highly replaceable, and probably struggling.

AI wouldn't make you a good writer by itself. Using AI to learn, practice, and implement feedback will.

## **Conclusion: The Art and Process of Writing**

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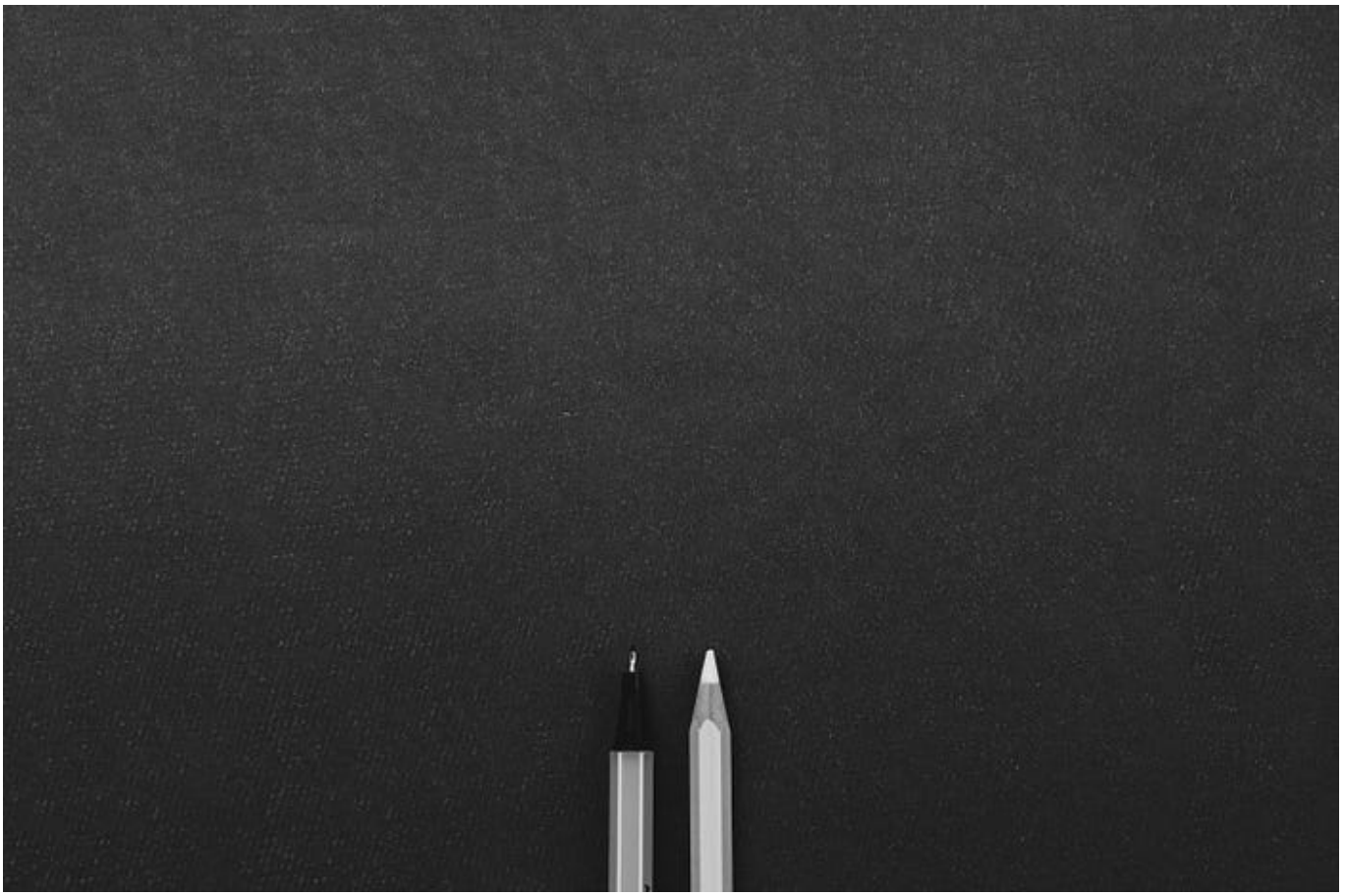


Photo by on

It could get better, or it could get worse — but Artificial Intelligence, as we know it, is here to stay. That much is a given.

But what's often left out of the discussion is, "How does AI fit? Where in the art and process of writing does it fit into?"

Whether you need to know exactly how it fits before you make a decision, or you need a guide to help you determine how to use AI based on the kind of writing you're doing, this framework will help. It will certainly inform my decisions from here on out.

Every time I write something, I will ask myself: "How much of myself is in this piece of writing?"

My use of AI will depend on the answer:

- No AI at all.
- Some AI augmentation, depending on need.
- Heavy AI augmentation, as long as it's used well.

Mastering the Three Levels, is how I will master writing with AI.

What do you think?

## Hey, I'm writing a book!

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It's going to solve one specific problem: **editing AI content**.

It's going to help:

- Writers who want to start implementing AI to speed up their writing process without losing their voice.
- Content creators using AI tools to make high-quality branded articles, blog posts, or social media content.
- Non-writers who want to lessen the learning curve of implementing AI-augmented Mantle Level and Surface Level writing.

This book will remove all the fluff from using AI.

Stripping all the hero-worship and fear mongering, Large Language Models actually have a place in the writing process, even for the most die-hard AI hater. And no, you don't need special prompts, or technical knowledge.

You just need to know how to use what it gives you. Just like most of writing.

There are things I'm planning and discovering for this book still, but one thing I know for sure is that ...

## It's going to be free for early supporters.

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I'm going to post the complete contents of the book in my Buy Me a Coffee page. Supporters can buy a \$5 coffee once, and read everything for free once it's done.

This mechanism is to ensure that **I publicly commit to this project, so you will be helping me publish my very first digital product.**

Or, you know, you can not buy it and not support, it's totally fine. I'm going to keep posting stuff you (hopefully) find useful anyway.

More updates soon.

## ONE LAST THING

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Before you leave, can you do me a quick favor? I want to ensure this product actually help YOU solve your problem, in the best way possible.

So, can you tell me the single biggest issue you face when working with AI content?

I will read every single response, and you will have my heartfelt gratitude.

Talk soon,



James.