Your AI Policy: Fill In the Blanks

This is the working companion to the briefing *Rules Before Tools*. Fill in the blanks, delete what does not apply, and you have a written AI policy and register for your firm. The wording in dark type is already written for you and is safe to keep as it stands. The lines are for the parts only you can answer.

STEP ONE

Fill in the details on this page and the eight sections that follow. Allow about an hour.

STEP TWO

Complete the register on the last page, one line for every tool in use, official or not.

STEP THREE

Talk the team through it in one meeting, then sign and date the last page.

A note on scope. This template covers AI tools your people type into, such as chatbots and writing assistants, and AI features built into software you already pay for. It is written for a firm without a compliance department. If you sell AI-enabled products into the EU, or run AI that decides something significant about a person, you will need more than this page and should take advice.

The basics

FIRM NAME

DATE THIS VERSION WAS WRITTEN

WHO OWNS THIS POLICY (ONE NAMED PERSON)

THEIR ROLE AND HOW TO REACH THEM

WHO THIS POLICY APPLIES TO

Usually: everyone who works here, including part-time staff, contractors and anyone doing work in our name.

DATE IT WILL NEXT BE REVIEWED

Pick a real date within six months and put it in the diary now.

Section 1. Why we have this policy

1 Our reason for writing this down

We want people here to use AI to do good work. This policy exists so that we do it without giving away what the firm knows, and without sending out work that nobody has checked. It is not a ban and it is not a test. If something here gets in the way of doing the job well, tell the person named above and we will change it.

Add anything particular to your firm: a client contract that restricts data, a regulator you answer to, a promise you have made to customers.

Section 2. Approved tools

2 What we are allowed to use

These are the only AI tools approved for work here. Each is a business account paid for by the firm, with the setting that lets the provider learn from our text switched off, and a written agreement with the provider that says so. If you want to use something else, ask first. Do not use a personal account for work.

TOOL	ACCOUNT TYPE	WHO PAYS FOR IT	LEARNING SWITCHED OFF?
Example: writing assistant	*Business, firm-wide*	*The firm*	*Yes, checked 1 Sept*

How to check the setting. In most business tools it is under settings, privacy or data controls, and is worded as something like "improve the model for everyone" or "use my data for training". It should be off. If you cannot find it, the account is probably a personal one.

Section 3. What never goes in

3 Our list of things that stay inside the firm

Never type, paste or upload any of the following into an AI tool, including an approved one, unless the person named on page 1 has said in writing that it is allowed.

- [ ] Names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses or any other details that identify a customer, member of staff, applicant or supplier
- [ ] Anything a client or customer gave us in confidence
- [ ] Health, financial or other sensitive personal information about anybody
- [ ] Unpublished figures: accounts, prices we have not announced, tender numbers, forecasts
- [ ] Passwords, bank details, card numbers or access codes
- [ ] Our own designs, drawings, source code, recipes or methods
- [ ] Anything covered by a non-disclosure agreement
- [ ] Anything we would not put in an email to a stranger

Add anything else that must stay inside your firm:

A useful habit. Describe the situation rather than pasting the document. "A customer says their order arrived damaged and wants a refund outside our returns window" gets you the same draft as pasting the whole email, without sending anything out.

Section 4. What it is for, and what it is not for

4 Where AI helps here, and where it stops

FINE TO USE AI FOR

Drafting and rewording. Summarising long documents. Sorting or tagging a first pass. Suggesting ideas. Checking our own spelling, grammar and figures. Explaining something we do not understand.

Add the jobs you want it used for:

NOT FOR AI TO DECIDE

Who gets hired, promoted or let go. Who gets credit, a discount or a refund. Anything that goes to a customer without a person reading it first. Anything involving somebody's health, money or safety. Legal, tax or medical advice.

Add anything else that is off limits here:

Section 5. Check before you send

5 The person who sends it owns it

AI tools produce confident answers that are sometimes wrong. If your name is on it, you are responsible for it, exactly as you would be if you had written every word yourself. Before anything drafted with AI leaves the firm, check every figure, price, date, name and factual claim against the original source. If you cannot check it, take it out.

Who checks what, if you want to be specific. For example: quotes are checked by the office manager, anything for a client is read by the account lead.

Section 6. Telling people

6 Being straight with customers and applicants

Where a customer or applicant is dealing with an AI tool rather than a person, we say so, and we always give them a way to reach a person instead. Where a tool has helped decide something about somebody, we tell them, we let a person look at it again if they ask, and we let them challenge the outcome.

WHERE WE SAY THIS (WEBSITE, PRIVACY NOTICE, JOB ADVERTS)

HOW SOMEONE ASKS FOR A PERSON TO LOOK AGAIN

Suggested wording for a website or privacy notice. "We sometimes use AI tools to help draft replies and sort enquiries. A member of our team checks anything we send you. If a decision has been made about you with the help of one of these tools, you can ask us to look at it again and we will have a person review it. Contact us at [ ]. "

Section 7. Who owns this

7 One name, not a committee

The person named on page 1 keeps the register up to date, answers questions about this policy, approves any new tool, and reviews the whole thing on the date set. They do not need to be technical. They need to know what we use and be willing to ask.

WHO APPROVES A NEW TOOL

WHO TO ASK IF UNSURE

WHO COVERS WHEN THEY ARE AWAY

Section 8. When it goes wrong

8 Tell us the same day, and nobody gets shouted at

If you put something into a tool that you should not have, or something wrong went out, say so the same day. We would far rather know early. Nobody will be disciplined for an honest mistake reported promptly. Repeatedly ignoring this policy, or hiding a problem, is a different matter and will be handled under our usual procedures.

WHO TO TELL, AND HOW

WHAT WE DO NEXT (CHANGE PASSWORD, TELL THE CUSTOMER, TELL THE ICO WITHIN 72 HOURS IF PERSONAL DATA IS INVOLVED)

Worth knowing. If personal information has been exposed and there is a risk to the people involved, a UK firm generally has 72 hours to report it to the Information Commissioner's Office. Knowing that in advance is the point of writing this section now rather than on the day.

Five questions to ask any AI supplier before you sign

1. Do you use our data, or anything our staff type in, to train or improve your models? We need a no, in writing.
2. Where is our data stored, and for how long after we stop using you?
3. Can we get our data back, and have it deleted, if we leave?
4. Who else can see it: your staff, your subcontractors, anyone else?
5. If your tool helps decide something about a person, what can you tell us about how it reaches that answer?

Getting it going: the first month

- [ ] **Week one.** Ask everyone, with no blame attached, which AI tools they already use for work. Write them all down. The list is almost always longer than expected.
- [ ] **Week two.** Pick one or two tools to approve, and pay for the business version. Switch off learning from your text and keep a copy of the provider's terms.
- [ ] **Week three.** Fill in this template, complete the register, and read it once yourself to check it sounds like your firm rather than a lawyer.
- [ ] **Week four.** Talk the team through it in one meeting. Sign it, date it, put the review date in the diary, and leave a copy where people work.

Your AI register

One line for every AI tool in use, whether the firm approved it or not. Include tools built into software you already pay for, such as a chatbot on the website, a sorting feature in recruitment software or a summarising button in your email. If you are not sure whether something counts, put it in.

TOOL AND ACCOUNT	WHAT WE USE IT FOR	INFORMATION IT TOUCHES	OWNER	HUMAN CHECK BEFORE IT COUNTS	NEXT REVIEW
Writing assistant, business account	*Drafting quotes and letters*	*Product details and prices; no customer data*	*Office manager*	*Sender checks every figure and name*	*March 2027*

The column that matters most. "Human check before it counts" is the one a regulator would look at first. A signature added after the decision has taken effect does not count. A person who reads it and can still change the outcome does.

Sign off

WRITTEN BY _____ DATE _____

APPROVED BY (OWNER OR DIRECTOR) _____ DATE EXPLAINED TO THE TEAM _____

Keep one signed copy where staff can find it, and put the review date in the diary. A policy nobody has read protects nobody.