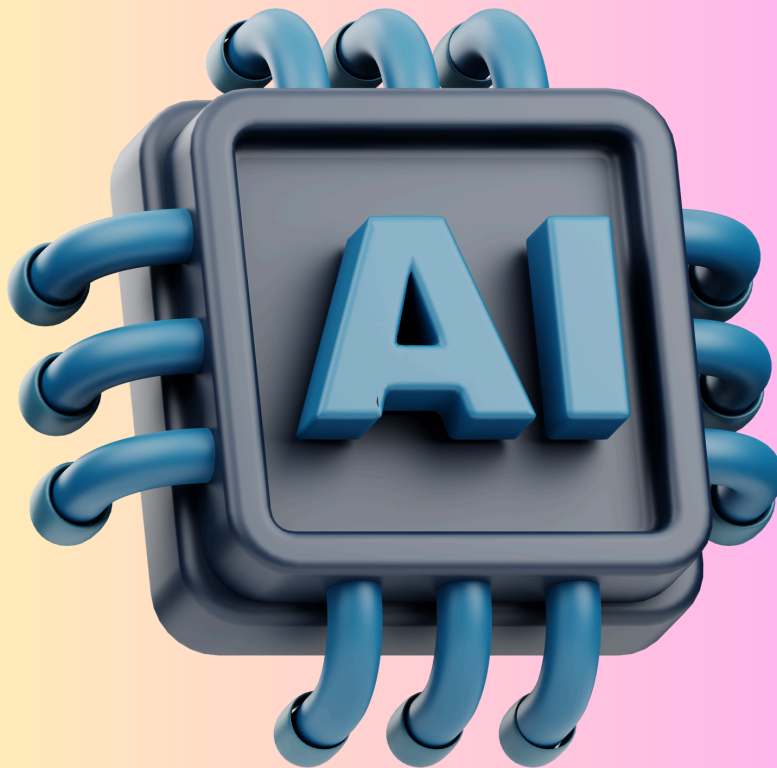




Why Writers Need an AI Assistant

Hank Quense



Why Writers Need an AI Assistant

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Getting Started

If you are a writer or an author (or both) you need an Artificial Intelligence (AI) app to use in your work.

Before getting into that, let's take a look at AI. Artificial Intelligence is quite the rage these days. It offers a lot of promise, but many of these promises are couched in technobabble and doublespeak and therefore are not understandable by people without specialized training. Youtube has many videos "explaining" AI, yet many of them remain incomprehensible to most viewers. What is often missing are practical applications that folks untrained in AI can use.

That is what this book is about: a practical guide on how to use AI as a writing assistant without all the technobabble.

This brings up the questions: Why should get an AI app? Why should I use it in my work?

Let's ask an AI app why you should use an AI app.

Query: What can an AI assistant do for a writer?

Response: *An AI assistant can help a writer in many practical ways:*

- *Brainstorm ideas, plot points, or character names when you're stuck.*
- *Suggest outlines, section headings, or ways to organize your work.*
- *Offer alternative word choices, rewrite tricky sentences, and help clarify your writing.*
- *Check grammar, spelling, and style for a more polished draft.*
- *Expand, summarize, or condense sections of your text as needed.*
- *Provide creative prompts or generate sample paragraphs to get you started.*
- *Give feedback on tone and help adapt your writing for different audiences.*
- *Save you time by handling repetitive or technical editing tasks.*

In short, an AI assistant acts like a 24/7 writing partner—helping you brainstorm, organize, draft, and polish your work, so you can focus on your ideas and creativity.

(Note: text in italics was created by Perplexity.AI, an AI app that I use. Non-italic text is mine. Perplexity.ai, in other words, is my writing assistant.)

It may seem a bit mysterious that a computer program can do all this stuff. So let's ask it how it works.

Query: Explain how AI researches a topic. Keep the response short and don't use a lot of technical language.

Response: AI researches a topic by quickly searching through huge amounts of information online and in its own database. Here's how it works in simple terms: You ask a question or give a topic.

The AI scans articles, books, and websites for relevant information.

It summarizes the main points, compares sources, and organizes the facts.

The AI then gives you a clear, easy-to-understand answer, often with suggestions for where to learn more.

Think of AI as a super-fast research assistant that can find, sort, and explain information in seconds, helping you get the details you need without all the manual searching.

This is a good explanation of what goes on behind the scenes with an AI app.

I want to point a few things about AIs. How you interact with the AI is through queries. A query gives the AI the instructions it needs to carry out the assignment. A big part of learning how to use an AI is understanding how to write a query that is meaningful to the AI. Over the course of this project, you'll see a lot of examples of useful queries. I wrote all these queries and you can copy and use them as is, or modify them to satisfy your own needs.

Notice in my last query I told the AI "Keep the response short and don't use a lot of technical language." That's because AIs tend to be long-winded. Their responses will be loooong. They also like to show off how smart they are and will use a lot of technobabble if you let them.

Is this stuff ethical?

Let's address this question and get it out of the way. This project demonstrates a number of ways that writers and authors can use artificial intelligence in their daily routines with writing, publishing and marketing.

For writing applications, using AI to help develop characters and plots comes under the heading of providing models that can be used to augment the writer's thought processes. These models can save the writer a lot of time which can then be devoted to more creative work. These models can also trigger ideas that the writer can use

With publishing, the AI applications replace time-consuming 'donkey work.'

With marketing, AI provides solid marketing plans and ideas, but the author still must do the marketing work.

So, my answer to the question: is this stuff ethical? Yes, the queries and applications in this project are most certainly ethical. However, as a writer, you have a responsibility to disclose the extent of your AI usage as I do with the italicized text..

Can AI replace you as a writer?

The short answer is yes, the AI can replace you as a writer. **If you let it!**

If you accept an AI response as a completed draft then you have allowed the AI to replace your creativity. I treat an AI response as a first draft. It needs revision. It also (probably) needs to have its word count reduced, sometimes significantly. This is because AI responses are wordy. They love to babble on and bore you to tears!

AI as a collaborator, not a competitor

Before we get into using the AI as a writing assistant, I want to reinforce the idea that an AI app is useful. So I asked my AI app to explain the concept embedded in the title of this project: why writers need an AI assistant?.

This is the response:

Embracing Partnership Over Rivalry

The conversation around artificial intelligence is rapidly evolving from one of competition to collaboration. Instead of viewing AI as a threat to jobs or creativity, leading thinkers and organizations are recognizing its potential as a powerful partner that amplifies human strengths rather than replacing them.

How Collaboration Works

Division of Strengths:

AI excels at processing vast amounts of data quickly, automating repetitive tasks, and surfacing insights, while humans bring creativity, empathy, critical thinking, and contextual understanding. By combining these strengths, teams can solve complex problems more effectively and efficiently.

Enhanced Productivity:

With AI handling routine or time-consuming tasks, people are freed up to focus on strategic, creative, and relationship-driven work—areas where human skills are irreplaceable.

Higher Quality Outcomes:

Research shows that workers who see AI as a teammate, not just a tool, achieve better results. Strategic collaboration with AI leads to improved work quality, more innovative solutions, and continuous improvement across teams.

Mindset Matters:

The key to unlocking AI's full potential is mindset. Seeing AI as a collaborator encourages experimentation, knowledge sharing, and the development of new workflows that maximize both human and machine capabilities. This approach not only drives better business outcomes but also fosters job satisfaction and professional growth.

Conclusion

The shift toward AI as a collaborator is not just a trend—it's a strategic imperative. By working alongside AI, individuals and organizations can elevate their impact, drive innovation, and focus on what humans do best: connecting, creating, and leading with purpose.

Enough with the preliminary thoughts. Let's get into the good stuff!

II. Breaking Through Writer's Block

An AI app is especially good at generating ideas that can overcome writer's block. It does this by throwing lists of ideas at the writer. Often, one or more of these ideas will shove your brain into gear and you'll be off and running.

However, first you have to learn about writing queries or prompts as they are sometimes called

Using AI tools to generate prompts, outlines, and first drafts

To use an AI program, you'll have to ask it specific questions or give it specific instructions on what it should do. These questions and instructions are known as "queries" or "prompts".

In using AI, a general query will produce a bland response that isn't of much use. The response will be more or less what you get in any book on the topic or stuff you already know. To get useful, unique responses, you must provide the AI program with detailed, unique queries. This requires a bit of practice.

To restate this, your query is how you communicate or 'talk' with an AI program. Remember, AI is just a piece of software and it will follow your instructions exactly. To get a useful reply from an AI program, your query must be precise.

Let's look at a few examples. Suppose you have a vague idea about a story but writer's block has settled in and you can't get the story started. So, AI to the rescue!

Generic query: I want to write a story about cattle rustlers. Write a 200 word story line for this story..

Here is the opening part of the response:

In the drought-scorched heart of 1880s Texas, rancher Clara McAllister's family herd is her last hope against foreclosure. When a string of moonlit raids leaves her pastures empty and her dreams in tatters, suspicion falls on neighboring cowboys whose herds have mysteriously multiplied overnight. Desperate, Clara enlists the help of Tom Reyes, a drifting ex-rustler seeking redemption, who knows every trick in the rustler's book—from altering brands with a running iron to spiriting away unbranded calves under cover of darkness . . .

The AI made up a storyline that sounds like a generic Western because it had a generic set of instructions

Now let's try it with a more specific query: I want to write a Western story. It takes place right after the Civil War in Missouri where North and South veterans often re-fight the war. Jim Hatchet, an ex-Yankee soldier wounded in the war, is trying to make a living as a general store owner. Write a 200 word storyline to get me started.

Response: (with more detailed instructions comes a more nuanced and detailed response).

In the scorched aftermath of the Civil War, Missouri is a land divided, its towns scarred by old loyalties and new grudges. Jim Hatchet, once a Union infantryman, carries a limp and a bullet lodged near his spine—a constant reminder of the war he survived. Seeking peace, he settles in the border town of Dry Creek, opening a modest general store with hopes of building a quiet life. But Dry Creek is no sanctuary. The town simmers with tension: former Confederates and Union men eye each other warily, old wounds bleeding into daily life.

Jim's store becomes a reluctant crossroads for both sides, and he finds himself caught between simmering feuds and the desperate need to keep his business afloat. When a series of thefts and violent incidents threaten to ignite the powder keg, suspicion falls on Jim, the outsider Yankee. As tempers flare and a shadowy gang exploits the chaos, Jim must decide whether to keep his head down or confront the ghosts of war—both his own and those haunting Dry Creek. In a town where peace is as fragile as glass, Jim's choices will shape not only his future, but the fate of a community still fighting for its soul.

Perplexity in its response always adds a list of related questions for you to explore deeper into the topic. Here is the list for the last response:

- *How does Jim Hatchet navigate the tensions between North and veterans in his town*
- *What secrets from Jim's past might threaten his new life as a store owner*
- *How do the local townspeople view Jim's efforts to rebuild after the war*
- *What unexpected visitors or conflicts challenge Jim's peace in Missouri*
- *How does Jim's wounded leg influence his decisions and relationships*

For the record, I used a 200 word storyline to limit the size of the

response. Normally, I would ask for a 500 word storyline.

Once you get a response you like your next job is to cherry-pick the best ideas. The response will give you a number of ideas about your new story, you have to pick the ones you want to incorporate into it and discard the others.

Joanna Penn is a respected author, lecturer and writing coach. This is how she frames this chore: “There is no magic button I can press to output a perfectly formed finished product, nor would I want to, anyway.”

That’s the thing: however you use generative AI tools, the creative decisions — what to include and leave out, how to say what you want to say, when humor moments work, and so on — remain ultimately, entirely, up to you.

Streamlining research, fact-finding and organization tasks

This is an area where AI really shines. Do you need to research a topic for the book? There’s a query for that. Do you need some facts for an article? AI can find those facts. Do you need an outline for a project or a book? Let AI develop it.

Let’s start by asking AI how it researches a topic.

Query: Explain how AI researches a topic. Keep the response short and don’t use a lot of technical language.

Response: *AI researches a topic by quickly searching through huge amounts of information online and in its own database. Here’s how it works in simple terms:*

You ask a question or give a topic.

The AI scans articles, books, and websites for relevant information.

It summarizes the main points, compares sources, and organizes the facts.

The AI then gives you a clear, easy-to-understand answer, often with suggestions for where to learn more.

Notice two things about the query: First I told it to keep the response short (AI responses tend to be waaay too long). Second I told the AI to limit the technobabble (AI’s like to show off how smart they are). Without these restrictions, the response would have rambled on for a few pages of technical gibberish.

Think of AI as a super-fast research assistant that can find, sort, and explain information in seconds, helping you get the details you need without all the manual searching.

Fact-finding queries are similar to research. so I won’t show and queries and responses.

AIs are great at organizing a project or a campaign such as a marketing campaign. Let me show a query I wrote recently and the embarrassing response I got.

Query: Create an online for an article with the title: Why writers should get an AI assistant.

Response: it was two-pages long and after reading it, I realized the article was really a book and the AI response was correct: an 700 or 800 word article could never do justice to a topic: The response gave birth to this project after I heavily edited the outline..

III. AI Assistance For Writers And Authors

If you're like me, revising and editing is more than a bit of pain. I like creating stuff, but cleaning it up isn't my idea of fun. AI can be big help in this regard because it is quite adept at doing revision and editing. Some illustrative examples follow.

Dramatic reduction in revision and editing time

Editing:

AI apps can edit a piece of your writing. In this case the appropriate query can be quite simple.

Here is what the general editing query can look like

Query: Edit the following piece: {paste text here}

Here is another example.

Query: Edit the following piece: "My next book, *The Author's AI toolkit: From Concept to Publication* will become available on March 1. The ebook can be preordered at a reduced price using this link <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0DV4M13BH?>"

Response: *My next book, The Author's AI Toolkit: From Concept to Publication, will be available on March 1. You can preorder the ebook at a discounted price using this link: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0DV4M13BH>*

There isn't much difference between the query and the response, but it does illustrate the process. AI apps tend not to show what it changed.. A solution to this issue is to add the following statement to your editing queries: Highlight your changes.

Want to see a neat trick you can use with an editing or a rewrite query? Tell it to identify areas where Show-Don't-Tell can be deployed.

Query: Edit the following piece and point out examples where Show-Don't-Tell can be used {paste text here}.

Rewriting (or revision):

AI apps can be used to rewrite scenes, articles, letters and whatever. Here is an example. I took a paragraph from an article I wrote, pasted it into Perplexity.AI and gave the app a set of instructions.

Query: Rewrite this paragraph two different ways: one in a light-hearted tone, one in a pompous tone: "Self-publishing a book is a complex project. It gets even more complex when you add in the necessary pre-publication

marketing tasks. The best way to proceed with a project like this is by using a detailed plan. This article describes such a plan in brief.”

Response:

Light-Hearted Tone

Publishing your own book is no walk in the park—it’s more like a hike up a mountain with a backpack full of snacks and surprises. And just when you think you’ve reached the summit, here comes pre-publication marketing to add a little extra weight! But don’t worry, the best way to tackle this adventure is with a trusty map (a.k.a. a detailed plan). Lucky for you, this article gives you the lowdown on how to get started!

Pompous Tone

Ah, the noble endeavor of self-publishing—a veritable odyssey of intellectual labor and creative ambition. Yet, as if crafting the manuscript were not Herculean enough, one must also contend with the labyrinthine intricacies of pre-publication marketing. Fear not, for the sagacious path forward lies in the meticulous construction of a master plan. This article, in its wisdom, deigns to outline such a plan for your enlightenment.

Overall, using an AI app for editing and rewriting chores can drastically reduce the time spent on these mundane chores. This offers intriguing possibilities, doesn’t it? In this project my writing (not the AI text) will be edited using my AI buddy, Perplexity....

AI as a source of inspiration for plot twists, character development, and more.

Writing fiction requires developing a lot of different elements and then blending them seamlessly together. This blending is pretty much the work of the writer, but the development of characters and plots is another area where AIs can shine.

Suppose in your story, you want a character to be modeled on a character from a book or a movie or a TV series. Put this query into the Ai app and stand back.

Query: What makes {character name} a great character?

Response: It will be a few pages long filled with details and insights. Your job will pick out a few traits to install into your character. I don’t think you want to build a character exactly like your model so grabbing a few traits should be sufficient to make your character memorable.

If you use this query with a number of famous characters, you can build up a collection of character details and start your own character database for future reference.

To effectively use an AI app in some of these applications, you need to write a storyline or synopsis of perhaps 400-500 words. The purpose of the storyline is to give the AI the context it needs to generate a response that will fit your needs.

Let's take a look at an example of using a storyline. I wrote this one for a published story of mine called *Romeo and Juliet*. It's based on an old play by some guy named Shakespeare.

"In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo is a poor dwarf miner and Juliet is a rich elf maiden. Their families have been feuding for years and the feud has resulted in a few murders. Romeo and Juliet meet at a ballet class (Romeo dreams of leaving the mines and becoming a dancer). The two fall in love. Juliet's brothers are scheming to marry her off to an old rich count and ennobling the family name. The two meet surreptitiously in Juliet's garden and swear eternal love".

This is what the query looks like:

Query. based on this storyline, develop a plot that doesn't follow Shakespeare's play. {Inset storyline}

Response (hint: it's long)

*Certainly! Here's a fresh plot inspired by your storyline that diverges significantly from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*:*

Plot: The Dance of Shadows and Light

Setting

A mystical realm where dwarves and elves inhabit distinct territories—dwarves mining deep underground, elves flourishing in treetop cities. The two races have a long-standing feud fueled by competition over magical resources.

Main Characters

Romeo: A poor dwarf miner, physically small but with a fierce spirit and a secret talent for dance. He dreams of transcending his harsh life underground.

Juliet: A wealthy elf maiden, graceful and intelligent, bound by family duty but yearning for freedom and authenticity.

Plot Summary

Act 1: Forbidden Dreams

Romeo, tired of the oppressive mining life, secretly enrolls in a ballet class held in a neutral zone—a grand, ancient amphitheater where both elves and dwarves occasionally mingle. Juliet, curious about the world beyond her gilded cage, also attends the class to learn about the "common folk" and escape her royal obligations.

Act 2: A Bond Beyond Blood

Romeo and Juliet meet during the ballet class, their shared passion for dance bridging the cultural chasm. They form a deep friendship that blossoms into love, defying their families' bitter feud. They meet secretly in Juliet's enchanted garden, where magical plants bloom only at night, and vow to unite their worlds through art and understanding.

Act 3: The Conspiracy

Juliet's brothers, intent on securing power, plot to marry her to an ancient and powerful count who promises to elevate their family's status and crush the dwarves' influence once and for all. Meanwhile, Romeo's mining community faces increasing exploitation, and tensions rise.

Act 4: The Dance of Rebellion

Instead of tragedy, Romeo and Juliet devise a bold plan: to stage a grand ballet performance that tells the story of their peoples' shared history and the futility of hatred. The performance, held in the amphitheater, is attended by both dwarves and elves, including their families.

Act 5: A New Dawn

The ballet captivates the audience, stirring empathy and understanding. The families, moved by the courage and artistry of the young lovers, agree to a tentative truce. Juliet rejects the arranged marriage, choosing love and peace over power. Romeo gains recognition not only as a dancer but as a leader advocating for unity.

This plot transforms the original tragic romance into a story of hope, cultural reconciliation, and the transformative power of art. It retains the core elements—feuding families, forbidden love, secret meetings—but replaces the fatal ending with a revolutionary act of creative defiance that changes their world.

If you want, I can help expand this into a detailed outline or develop specific scenes.

My story is quite different from this one. However, if I was just beginning the story, I certainly would consider using a few points from this plot. Now comes the task I bet you weren't expecting. You have to choose what parts of the response you wish to use and which parts you'll discard. Actually, you can accept or reject the entire response. Or you can modify the storyline and load the revised storyline into a new query.

Here's another way of approaching the plot without a storyline.

Query: I want to write a spoof of Romeo and Juliet. In my version, Romeo is poor dwarf miner and Juliet is rich elf maiden. Give me a list of possible plot events.

Response:

Possible Plot Events for a Spoof of Romeo and Juliet: Dwarf Miner Romeo & Elf Maiden Juliet

Below is a list of potential plot events for your comedic fantasy spoof, inspired by the major beats of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and adapted to your unique setting. This structure blends classic moments with opportunities for parody and fantasy hijinks.

1. The Feud

The Dwarf Miners' Guild and the Elven High Council have been rivals for centuries—perhaps over a disputed magical gemstone vein or ancient insult at a royal banquet⁴⁶.

Tensions run high at the annual "Festival of Gems and Blossoms," where both communities reluctantly gather.

2. The Inciting Party

Romeo, a poor but optimistic dwarf miner, sneaks (or tunnels) into the elves' lavish masquerade ball with his boisterous dwarf friends, possibly disguised as a shrub or a statue²⁴.

Juliet, a sheltered and clever elf maiden, is being courted by a pompous elf lord her parents favor.

3. Love at First Sight

Romeo and Juliet meet amid the festivities—perhaps over a spilled goblet of enchanted wine or a magical mishap—and are instantly smitten, despite realizing each other's heritage²⁴⁶.

Their first conversation is awkwardly interrupted by Juliet's overprotective cousin, an elven warrior with a grudge against dwarves.

4. The Secret Meeting

Romeo, undeterred, scales (or tunnels under) the elven manor's magical defenses to find Juliet in her moonlit garden or atop a treehouse balcony²⁵.

They exchange vows of love and concoct a plan to meet again, using coded messages hidden in mining maps or flower arrangements.

5. The Secret Wedding

With the help of a mischievous forest gnome (standing in for Friar Laurence), they are married in secret, possibly in a glittering crystal cavern or beneath an ancient tree²⁵.

The gnome hopes this union will finally unite dwarves and elves.

6. The Duel and Exile

A brawl breaks out between the dwarves and elves at a public event (perhaps a mining contest gone awry or a sabotage of the elves' magical fountain)³⁴.

Romeo's best friend (a wise-cracking dwarf) is slain by Juliet's cousin. Romeo, in a fit of rage, challenges and defeats the cousin, leading to his banishment from the elven lands³⁶.

7. The Desperate Plan

Juliet's parents, unaware of her marriage, insist she marry the elf lord. Juliet seeks help from the gnome, who gives her a potion that will make her appear to have turned into stone (or fallen into an enchanted sleep)⁴⁶.

The gnome sends a message to Romeo about the plan, but it's lost—perhaps intercepted by a greedy goblin or eaten by a magical mole.

8. The Tragic Misunderstanding

Romeo returns, believing Juliet truly lost. He attempts a grand, foolish gesture—like trying to tunnel into the elves' vault to retrieve a legendary love stone, only to find Juliet "lifeless"⁴⁶⁷.

In despair, he eats a handful of poisonous mushrooms (or drinks a cursed dwarven brew).

9. The Comic Finale

Juliet awakens, finds Romeo in distress, and tries to revive him with elven magic, resulting in slapstick chaos—maybe both end up with brightly colored hair or swapped voices.

The truth comes out, and their families, seeing the absurdity of the feud and the chaos caused, agree to a truce.

10. The Happy (or Satirical) Ending

Romeo and Juliet are celebrated as heroes of unity, perhaps opening the first joint dwarf-elf tavern or founding a new festival dedicated to mixed marriages.

The gnome officiates the renewal of their vows, and the story ends with a raucous, interspecies party.

These events mirror the original play's structure but allow for plenty of fantasy humor, slapstick, and satirical commentary on both Shakespeare and fantasy tropes. Adjust the tone and details to fit your comedic style and world-building preferences¹.

As before, your task is to choose what plot points you wish to keep and use.

Another use for the storyline and an AI app is a title search.

Query: Give me a list of titles for this story {insert storyline}

Brainstorming

This is one of my favorite AI applications. I use this one quite a lot to flesh out ideas or when I get stuck for a word or a phrase. While Brainstorming was mentioned earlier, it wasn't detailed in any depth.

AI as a brainstorming partner for fresh ideas and new perspectives.

I get a lot of ideas. They just pop up unannounced. Before AI, I'd jot a note about the idea to store it until I had time to explore it. Often when I went back, I had no idea what the idea was about or why I noted it. Now, when I get an idea, I open Perplexity and write a query: "I have this idea

about (describe idea). Expand this idea to give me a better perspective on it and list five possibilities on how to use the idea”

The response almost always gives me insights that I never would have thought of.

Here is an application that really happened. An author friend of mine was writing a mystery novel and in the middle of a scene her protagonist got into a nasty situation and she couldn't think of a way to get him out of it. So, she fired up an AI app, wrote a query that described the situation and said, "Give me five humorous ways I can get the guy out of trouble". The AI responded with the five solutions. She picked one and finished the scene.

Here is another example that actually happened to me. I had this idea for an article. The working title was "Why Writers Should Get An AI Assistant". I put the title into an AI query and told it to create an outline. It did. Except the outline was two pages long wasn't for an article. It was for a book!

Upon reflection, I decided the AI was correct. A seven or eight hundred word article would ever adequately explain the subject. And that was the genesis of the book you are now reading after I modified the outline quite a bit.

Query: How can AI be used to brainstorm?

Response: *AI can significantly enhance the brainstorming process by providing new perspectives, speeding up idea generation, and improving creativity. Here's how AI can be used effectively in brainstorming sessions:*

1. Data Input and Processing

Input Prompts: Users start by inputting a prompt, question, or context into the AI system. This serves as the foundation for generating ideas.

AI Processing: The AI uses machine learning algorithms and natural language processing to analyze patterns and relationships within its data.

2. Idea Generation

Creative Suggestions: Based on its analysis, AI generates creative suggestions, ideas, or solutions related to the input prompt. This output can range from text-based responses to more complex suggestions.

Exploring Scenarios: AI can explore "what-if" scenarios and provide various plot directions or solutions that users can refine and develop further.

3. Collaboration and Iteration

Human Collaboration: The generated ideas are presented to users who evaluate, refine, and build upon them. Human judgment is crucial for selecting the best ideas.

Feedback Loop: Engaging in a feedback loop with AI allows users to continuously refine their ideas based on AI's suggestions.

4. Enhancing Creativity

Overcoming Writer's Block: AI can offer continuous prompts and ideas to help overcome creative barriers like writer's block.

Diverse Perspectives: By analyzing large datasets, AI can offer various perspectives that humans might not consider, thus enhancing creativity.

5. Efficiency and Productivity

Rapid Idea Generation: AI can quickly generate a large number of ideas, saving time and allowing teams to focus on refining the most promising one.

Structured Brainstorming: AI-driven tools can facilitate a more structured brainstorming process by providing real-time analysis of discussions.

6. Applications in Various Fields

Storytelling and Writing: Writers can use AI to brainstorm story ideas, develop characters, and structure plots by generating prompts based on themes or genres.

Business Strategy: Business leaders can use AI to explore multiple approaches for strategic decisions or problem-solving.

In conclusion, while AI can greatly enhance the brainstorming process by providing speed, diversity, and structure, it is most effective when used in collaboration with human creativity and judgment.

Here are more queries — without responses — you can use to brainstorm an idea or a topic.

Query: Create a list of typical brainstorming ideas writers and authors can use.

Query: I have an idea about {enter idea description}. Expand the idea by brainstorming possible {applications/expansions/variations}.

Query: I plan to write a nonfiction book called {insert title} {insert short description} Generate an outline for the book. The book is nonfiction and doesn't require characters or a plot.

After using this query several times, I added the last sentence to prevent the AI from giving a list of characters and plot points in its response.

Query: I want to write a story {insert storyline} develop a plot for this story.

Query: Analyze the plot of {enter story title}.

Actually, how you use this brainstorming feature is up to your individual creativity. If you're like me, once you try it your response will be, "Holy S—t!"

IV AI For Publishing And Marketing

Artificial Intelligence can be a great asset in the publishing and marketing phases of a book launch. This is especially true with self-published books.

Query letters

An AI app can be a huge timesaver when it comes to writing query letters to agents and publishers.

The general format for a query is: My {title} is a {genre} book about {brief description}. Write a query letter targeted at an agent (or a publisher).

Let's see what Perplexity can do.

Query: My novel, *The King Who Disappeared*, is a humorous novel about the conflict between a king, Bohan and an evil wizard, Jerado. The story takes place in Gundarland, a fantasy land. Write a query letter for an agent.

Response:

*Certainly! Here's a polished query letter for your humorous fantasy novel, *The King Who Disappeared*:*

Dear [Agent's Name],

*I am seeking representation for my completed, 85,000-word humorous fantasy novel, *The King Who Disappeared*, set in the delightfully absurd realm of Gundarland. With the wit of Terry Pratchett and the whimsy of Jasper Fforde, my novel explores the chaos that ensues when a king vanishes—and his greatest foe is the only one who knows why.*

King Bohan of Gundarland is having a terrible week. His crown is missing, his advisors are revolting (in every sense), and to top it off, he's been magically erased from his own kingdom by the nefarious wizard Jerado. Now a nobody in his own castle, Bohan must team up with a talking goat, a disgruntled court jester, and a band of inept rebels to reclaim his throne—and his identity.

But Jerado has plans of his own, and none of them involve a happily ever after for Bohan. As the two adversaries clash in a battle of wits, spells, and questionable fashion choices, Gundarland teeters on the brink of utter ridiculousness. Only by embracing the absurd can Bohan hope to outsmart Jerado and prove that sometimes, the best way to rule is to disappear.

The King Who Disappeared combines satirical humor, quirky characters, and a fast-paced plot to create a fantasy adventure that will appeal to fans of Christopher Moore, Douglas Adams, and anyone who believes that laughter is the best weapon against evil wizards.

I am an author and lecturer based in Westwood, NJ, with several short stories published in [relevant publications, if any], and I bring my

background in [relevant field, if any] to craft engaging, character-driven narratives.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I have included the first [X] pages and a synopsis per your submission guidelines. I would be delighted to send the full manuscript upon request.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your contact information]

Feel free to personalize further or let me know if you'd like a version tailored to a specific agent or agency!

You can see that this is an excellent first draft. You'll have to clean this one up a bit as with all first drafts.

This example brings up two points about using AI apps that I'll address in depth in the next two chapters. The first is creating a walled-off a section of the AI app that is dedicated to a project (such as the novel) and has files uploaded into the section's local library. If that was the case with this query, The AI would 'read' the local files and be able to tailor the response with great accuracy. These walled-off sections are called Spaces in Perplexity and Projects in ChatGPT.

The second point is that if an AI app doesn't have enough information and/or instructions, it will make stuff up. The middle two paragraphs in the response were made up by the AI because it didn't know anything about the story

Self-publishing

A self-publishing author is responsible for a myriad of tasks. Some of them require research in order to find adequate information to upload into the packager's website. Specifically, these tasks include the book, description, keywords and categories. An Ai app can simplify the research and reduce the time spent on the tasks.

Book description

If you browse the book section on Amazon or other book seller's site, you'll see a wide different in approaches to writing a book description.

When asked, Perplexity stated: *The consensus among publishing platforms and marketing experts is that the ideal length for a book description is typically 150–200 words. This range is long enough to provide essential information and intrigue but short enough to maintain reader attention and avoid overwhelming potential buyers.*

Fiction book description

Query: Write a description for my novel {insert storyline/synopsis}

Let's try it out

Query: Write a 150-200 word description for this novel:

The King Who Disappeared, is a humorous novel about the conflict between a king, Bohan and an evil wizard, Jerado. The story takes place in Gundarland, a fantasy land.

Response:

The King Who Disappeared whisks readers away to the whimsical realm of Gundarland, where laughter and danger walk hand in hand. King Bohan, a ruler with more heart than sense, finds his reign upended when the nefarious wizard Jerado hatches a plot to seize the throne. With a wave of his wand and a wicked sense of humor, Jerado makes Bohan vanish—setting off a chain of uproarious events that throws the entire kingdom into chaos.

As Gundarland's citizens scramble to make sense of their missing monarch, Bohan embarks on a madcap journey through enchanted forests, peculiar villages, and magical mishaps. Along the way, he encounters a cast of eccentric allies and outlandish foes, each more memorable than the last. With wit as his weapon and a stubborn refusal to give up, Bohan must outsmart Jerado, reclaim his crown, and restore order to his beloved kingdom.

Brimming with clever banter, satirical twists, and fantastical adventure, The King Who Disappeared is a delightful romp that proves even the most unlikely heroes can save the day—especially when they have a sense of humor.

My storyline was short and more than a bit vague so the description doesn't really reflect my novel but you get the idea. Also the query should contain a directive to use keywords.

Query: Write a description for my novel {insert storyline/synopsis}. Use keywords in the description

Nonfiction book description

These descriptions are quite different from a novel description. Here are the important points to make according to my AI app.

Length: Keep it concise—ideally 150–250 words, no more than 3–4 short paragraphs.

- *Paragraphs: Use short paragraphs and white space for readability.*

Bullet points are especially effective for listing benefits or features.

- *Tone: Write in third person, even if the book itself is in first person.*

Avoid overly promotional or flowery language—clarity and authenticity work best.

- *Keywords: Sprinkle in high-traffic, relevant keywords naturally for search optimization.*

Now let's see a nonfiction query in action

Query:

My book *Creating Your First Novel* describes the five phases involved in creating a novel: planning, writing, publishing, marketing and author business. Write a 200-word description and insert keywords where appropriate.

Response:

Creating a novel involves navigating through five crucial phases: planning, writing, publishing, marketing, and the author business. Each phase is essential to transforming an idea into a successful novel.

Planning is the foundation of novel writing. It involves developing a compelling story idea, fleshing out characters, and outlining the plot structure. This phase helps writers establish a clear direction and maintain focus throughout the writing process

During the writing phase, authors bring their stories to life. This stage requires discipline and motivation to complete the first draft. Writers often set daily word count targets and deadlines to maintain momentum. Revising and editing follow, refining the manuscript into a polished piece.

The publishing phase involves preparing the manuscript for publication. Authors must decide between traditional publishing or self-publishing routes. This step includes formatting the manuscript, designing a cover, and possibly hiring an editor to ensure quality.

Marketing is crucial for reaching readers and generating interest in the novel. Authors use various strategies, such as social media promotion, book signings, and collaborations with bloggers or influencers, to build their audience and increase sales.

Finally, the author business aspect focuses on managing finances, building a brand, and planning future projects. Successful authors treat their writing as a business, continually seeking opportunities for growth and development.

Keywords

Give an AI app your storyline and ask it for relevant keywords and that's what you'll get in the response. You'll have to choose the ones you want to

use.

Query: Show me a list of keywords for this {insert storyline/synopsis}

Book categories

This is much the same as the keywords query. Ai can give you a list of appropriate categories for your book.

Query: What book categories should I use for {insert storyline/synopsis}

Marketing

When it comes to marketing, an AI app can create a number of useful responses that will save an author a lot of time and possibly money. Let's look at a few queries.

Query: Develop a strategic marketing plan for {insert storyline/synopsis}

Query: My new book will be launched on {inset date}. Prepare a six-week launch marketing plan for this event starting two weeks before launch. {insert storyline/synopsis}

Query: Prepare a complete marketing plan for my new book {insert storyline/synopsis}

Targeting

Targeting your audience is another area where an AI app can excel.

Query: How can I reach my targeted audience for my fantasy novel

Query: My novel is a fantasy story. How can I reach fantasy readers rather than the general population?

V. Perplexity “Spaces”

Perplexity has a feature called ‘spaces.’ ChatGPT has a similar feature called “projects.” Here is how Perplexity defines a space and lists how a writer can use one.

A "space" is an online area or digital workspace where you can organize your writing, ideas, and resources. In the context of AI writing platforms, a space lets you:

Collect and store drafts, notes, and research in one place

Collaborate with others by sharing your space

Experiment with AI tools to generate or refine content

Track your progress and organize projects by topic or theme

Essentially, a space helps you keep your writing organized and makes it easier to work, whether alone or with others

I find spaces to be quite useful and I have several of them. One of the first things I did when I started working on this project was to create a new space called Writers And AI Assistants. The space is dedicated to all things associated with this project.

Once you start a space, you can give it a description and instructions. These are shown in the screen shot.

Space details

Title Emoji

Writers and AI assistants

Description

This space will be used in conjunction with a book about AI assistants

Instructions

Your role is act as an expert resource about AI assistants, especially as it pertains to writers and authors.

Search settings

Include Web by default ☒

Search the web in addition to Space context for all searches

The instructions are important and can be as long and as detailed as required. Mine are short because of the limited scope of this project and because this space is temporary and will only be used until the project is completed. Next, I uploaded a copy of my book, *The Author's AI Toolkit* and a few articles I had written on AI. This constitutes a local library for the AI to call upon. As the AI responds to a query, it will search this local library as well as its usual sources.

There are more tasks this space can be used for. To find out what they are, I asked Perplexity.

Query: I'm a writer. Perplexity has a feature called "spaces." If I create a space, what could do with it?

Response: *What Can a Writer Do with Perplexity "Spaces"?*

Perplexity Spaces are a powerful feature designed to help writers organize, research, collaborate, and create more efficiently. Here's how you can leverage Spaces as a writer:

Organize Your Writing Projects

Centralize Research and Drafts: Create a Space for each book, article, or writing project. Store all your research threads, outlines, drafts, and reference materials in one place, making it easy to keep everything organized by topic or project.

Upload Files: As a Perplexity Pro user, you can upload up to 50 files per Space (Word docs, PDFs, images, etc.). This is ideal for storing manuscript drafts, research papers, character sheets, or marketing materials.

Knowledge Hub: Use Spaces as a personal knowledge base, combining your own files with real-time web search. This means you can ask questions and get answers that draw from both your uploaded documents and the latest online sources.

Collaborate with Others

Invite Collaborators: Spaces allow you to invite up to 10 participants (editors, co-authors, beta readers, or marketing partners). You control who can view or contribute, making it easy to work together on drafts, research, or promotional planning.

Shared Brainstorming: Collaborators can create new threads, ask follow-up questions, and contribute ideas directly within the Space, facilitating real-time group brainstorming and feedback.

Customize Your AI Assistant

Choose Your AI Model: Select from leading AI models (GPT-4o, Claude, Sonar, etc.) for each Space, tailoring the assistant's responses to your needs—whether you want creative brainstorming, detailed research, or concise summaries

Custom Instructions: *Give the AI specific directions or a persona for each Space. For example, you can instruct it to answer as a developmental*

editor, a marketing strategist, or a literary agent, depending on the project's needs.

Enhance Your Research and Writing Workflow

Deep Search: Ask questions that search both your files and the web, such as "Summarize all notes on world-building in my uploaded documents and find recent articles on fantasy tropes." This delivers tailored, context-rich answers for your writing.

Drafting and Editing: Use Spaces to generate outlines, brainstorm plot ideas, draft query letters, or edit chapters. You can upload your manuscript and ask the AI to suggest improvements, spot inconsistencies, or rewrite sections in a different style.

Content Creation Hub: Turn threads into ready-to-publish blog posts or web pages with one click, streamlining your content marketing or author pla

After I finish the first draft of the book, my space will continue to be useful. I plan to use it to record Beta reader comments. I'll use it to create and implement a marketing plan..After that I can delete it.

This isn't the only space I have. I have one I named Archimedes. I uploaded my nonfiction books, a few novels, several articles and a bio. This space is my primary one and I use it for anything associated with my work or business. The library of files I uploaded gives the AI insights into my thinking and style of writing

Integration with other apps

perplexity
Where Knowledge Begins

<https://www.perplexity.ai/collections/writers-a>

Perplexity

Perplexity is a free AI-powered answer engine that provides accurate, trusted, and real-time answers to any question.

What is this?

- Is it a book
- Or a series of articles?
- Or a lecture series?
- Or a video series ?
- Or all of the above?

More Beta readers (from Spaces)

Essential Questions for Nonfiction Beta Readers

Beta readers are invaluable for nonfiction authors, offering fresh perspectives on clarity, structure, engagement, accuracy, and audience connection. The most effective feedback comes from

Beta reader

If you want some helpful insights, ask your beta readers these questions:

- Did reading this feel like listening to a friend talk?

TOC

- 1 Getting started
- 2 Breaking through writer's block
- 3 for writers and authors
- 4 AI for publishing and marketing
- 5 Spaces
- 6 drawbacks
- 7 CTA

Beta readers

- Karin ?
- Elaine ?
- Cathy?
- Joylene ?

Formatting Cheat sheet

- chapter headings: 16 pt Bold
- 2 blank lines after chapter heading
- Section headings: 14 pt bold no indent
- sub-section 14 pt italics
- query 12 pt bold
- response 12 pt bold
- one line space after a section heading
- .

As useful as it is to have a dedicated, sealed off portion of the AI for this project, it isn't enough to manage and control the project. At this time, Perplexity has few integration options. On a project like this, I need a writing app. This is usually Scrivener or a Pages document. I also need an app to jot down questions and notes. Instead of jumping from app to app, I prefer to have all this content available in a single app. The way I can do that is to use a whiteboard app like Scrintal or Milanote. On this project, I chose Milanote. Milanote allows me to set up a main board and use sub-boards to keep the main board from getting too cluttered. This a screenshot for part of the whiteboard. Perplexity allows me to share the space with a link. That is what the Perplexity card is for, Clicking on it will access the Perplexity space for this project.

VI. Addressing the Drawbacks of AI

So far, I've talked about nothing but the good stuff that AI can provide. But that is a bit misleading because AI has a dark side. What are they? I'll put Perplexity on the witness stand and make it confess.

Query: What are the drawbacks in using AI as a writing assistant

Response:

AI writing assistants offer efficiency and support for writers, but they also come with *notable drawbacks that writers and authors should be aware of before integrating these tools into their creative process.*

1. Lack of Creativity and Originality

AI-generated content often feels formulaic and predictable because it is trained on existing data and patterns. This can result in writing that lacks the unique voice, emotional depth, and creative spark that distinguishes compelling human-authored work.

Over-reliance on AI may lead to homogeneity in writing, making content sound generic or similar to what others are producing with the same tools.

2. Quality and Accuracy Issues

AI tools can produce text that is factually incorrect, irrelevant, or even nonsensical, especially when dealing with complex or nuanced subjects. They may also "hallucinate" facts or sources, presenting information that is not supported by real data.

Outputs often require careful human supervision, editing, and fact-checking to ensure accuracy and coherence.

3. Limited Contextual Understanding

AI struggles to fully grasp context, subtext, irony, or subtle shifts in tone and mood, which are essential for nuanced storytelling or persuasive writing

It may misinterpret prompts, leading to responses that are off-topic or inappropriate for the intended audience or genre.

4. Loss of Authentic Voice

Heavy use of AI can dilute an author's personal style and authenticity, making the writing less distinctive and less engaging for readers seeking a genuine human perspective.

Readers may feel "cheated" if they discover that content is primarily AI-generated rather than the product of the author's own creativity and experience.

5. Ethical and Legal Concerns

Questions about originality and ownership arise with AI-generated content. There is uncertainty over who owns the copyright, and whether the content is truly original or derivative of existing works.

AI-generated content can inadvertently propagate bias or plagiarism, as these tools are trained on large datasets that may include biased or copyrighted material.

6. Outdated or Incomplete Information

AI models are trained on data up to a certain cutoff date and may not reflect the latest developments, terminology, or best practices in fast-evolving fields.

This limitation can result in outdated or misleading content, especially in areas like health, technology, or current events.

7. Requirement for Continuous Human Input

AI writing assistants are not fully autonomous; they require detailed prompts, ongoing supervision, and significant human intervention to produce high-quality, relevant content.

The time spent revising and correcting AI-generated drafts can sometimes negate the time-saving benefits these tools promise.

8. Risk of Academic Dishonesty and Homogeneity

In educational and professional settings, using AI for writing can raise concerns about academic dishonesty, as it may encourage students or professionals to pass off machine-generated work as their own.

The widespread use of similar AI tools can lead to a lack of diversity in ideas and expression, further contributing to a homogenized body of content.

Conclusion

AI writing assistants can be powerful tools for brainstorming, editing, and overcoming writer's block, but they are best used as supplements rather than replacements for human creativity and judgment. Writers should approach AI-generated content critically, always reviewing, editing, and infusing their own voice and expertise to ensure authenticity, accuracy, and originality.

It's up to the AI user to understand the dark side of using AI and to validate the responses. Always keep in mind that an AI has the ability to make stuff up if it can't find an answer to a query. If the response says "Julius Caesar in 325 CE led his Tenth Legion into the area now known as Estonia and conquered the native tribes." you better do some fact checking.

VII. Conclusions

So what conclusions can be drawn from this explanation of an AI assistant? Here are a few that have occurred to me.

The future of writing: human creativity amplified by AI

I'm convinced that AI offers a great tool to supplement human creativity. Its ability to draw on resources from a myriad of web locations provides us with information that would be virtually impossible to find on our own even if we had unlimited time.

Every writer should consider an AI assistant as a vital tool in their creative toolkit

Through out this project, I've demonstrated how an AI app can be used by writers and authors to save time on mundane tasks and leave more time for human creativity. All writers should invest the time and energy to learn how use and AI app.

Encouragement to experiment to find new creative ideas and projects.

One of the most interesting uses of AI for me is to simply write a bizarre query and let the AI crank away and see what the response is. I have. a space that has a local library of most of my books, lectures, articles and a bio. I love going into this space to write a query like, "I'm bored. Give me list of crazy projects I can work on." The response is always fascinating and sometimes off-the-wall. Like this response: "Take one of your best lines from a book and engrave it on block of wood."

Nope! Not happening!

Resources

The Author's AI Toolkit

hankquenseauthor.com

VIII. Summary

And now for something different, I'll try a different AI App called Goby.AI. This is brand new (as of this writing) and was developed by the people at Scrintal, a whiteboard app I use. What Goby does is analyze and summarize PDF files. I uploaded a PDF copy of this piece and Goby went to work on it. It broke down the response into six areas: Summary, Concepts, Quick answers, Key takeaways, Conclusions and All excerpts.

I'll show the Summary and the Key Takeaways. If I showed the entire report, I think it'd be longer than my writing.

Summary:

The article introduces the concept of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a writing assistant, focusing on practical applications without technical jargon. It begins by addressing common misconceptions about AI and emphasizing its role as a tool to enhance, not replace, human creativity. The author uses examples and queries with Perplexity.AI to illustrate how AI can assist in brainstorming, drafting, editing, publishing, and marketing.

The article explores overcoming writer's block by generating ideas and using detailed queries for more nuanced responses. It discusses streamlining research and fact-finding with AI, as well as using AI for revisions, plot development, and character creation. Specific AI applications in publishing and marketing are covered, such as writing query letters, creating book descriptions, and developing marketing plans. The article highlights the use of "spaces" or "projects" in AI platforms like Perplexity and ChatGPT to organize writing projects.

The article addresses the drawbacks of AI, such as lack of originality and potential for inaccuracies, emphasizing the need for human oversight. It concludes that AI can amplify human creativity by saving time on mundane tasks and providing access to vast resources, encouraging writers to experiment with AI tools while maintaining their unique voice and ethical responsibility.

Key takeaways

AI as a 24/7 Writing Partner. An Artificial Intelligence (AI) assistant can assist writers in brainstorming, organizing, drafting, and refining their work, which allows them to concentrate on their ideas and creativity. The AI can also research topics by searching through vast amounts of online information

and databases, summarizing main points, comparing sources, and providing suggestions for further learning.

The Importance of Detailed Queries. Using more detailed queries or prompts with AI programs yields more useful and unique responses, as general queries tend to produce bland, unhelpful results. By asking specific questions, writers can get tailored advice that is adapted to the writer's needs.

AI Streamlines Research and Organization. AI excels in streamlining research, fact-finding, and organization, assisting writers by researching topics, finding facts, and developing outlines for projects. It acts like a super-fast research assistant, helping writers gather details without manual searching.

AI Reduces Revision and Editing Time. AI can significantly reduce the time spent on mundane revision and editing tasks. It is adept at editing and rewriting content, offering writers the ability to refine their work more efficiently.

AI Simplifies Publishing and Marketing. When publishing a book, AI can save time and effort, especially for self-publishing authors. The AI can simplify the research and reduce the time spent on tasks such as writing book descriptions, finding keywords, determining book categories, and developing marketing plans.

The Uses and Benefits of Perplexity "Spaces". Perplexity "Spaces" (ChatGPT "projects") are useful for writers as they provide an online area to organize writing, ideas, and resources. Spaces allow users to collect and store drafts, notes, and research in one place; collaborate with others by sharing the space; experiment with AI tools to generate or refine content; and track progress and organize projects by topic or theme.

Drawbacks of Using AI as a Writing Assistant. Despite the advantages, there are drawbacks to using AI as a writing assistant, including a lack of creativity and originality, potential quality and accuracy issues, limited contextual understanding, loss of authentic voice, and ethical and legal concerns. There are also concerns about outdated information, the need for continuous human input, and the risk of academic dishonesty and homogeneity.

Gobu is an app I'll be using in the future. Let's face it, a lot of lengthy PDFs have important information in them, but it's a chore trying to dig them out and separate these nuggets from the chaff. Having an AI app that quickly summarizes an entire PDF will make life just a tiny bit easier.