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HUMAN × MACHINE: A FIELD GUIDE TO CREATIVE COLLABORATION

A practical, skeptical and playful handbook for turning generative AI assistance into work that a human can still explain, verify and stand behind.

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The organising idea is simple: the human gives direction, context, experience and accountability. The system may supply alternatives, transformations and speed. Neither guarantees quality. This guide provides a working model, three examples, practice sheets and questions worth keeping beside the keyboard.

How to use this guide

Read it in sequence or begin with the worksheet. Each exercise is designed to work with a chatbot, a local model, a different AI system, or no model at all. The objective is better judgment rather than maximum output.

01 · Define	02 · Generate	03 · Verify
State the goal and what would count as success.	Use an AI tool to explore plausible alternatives.	Check sources, inspect the artefact, revise or reject.

Authorship note: Sahil Tayal provided the concept and brief; ChatGPT assisted with writing, coding and layout. This is not a peer-reviewed study or a quantitative model of intelligence.

01 / A model with four stations

Think of collaboration as a loop rather than a contest between two competing minds. The stations below describe tasks, not personality traits or scientifically validated psychological dimensions.

Station	Human responsibility	Possible tool assistance
FRAME	Choose the question, beneficiary, constraints and ethical boundaries.	Suggest scope options or expose assumptions.
EXPLORE	Choose what is promising and keep alternatives alive.	Generate sketches, code candidates, drafts and objections.
TEST	Set criteria and inspect independent evidence.	Produce checklists and test cases, not definitive guarantees.
PUBLISH / REVISE	Accept accountability, credit, accessibility and maintenance.	Format, document, surface errors and propose corrections.

A useful diagram: the accountability loop

HUMAN INTENT →	MACHINE CANDIDATES →
HUMAN CRITIQUE ←	EXTERNAL EVIDENCE ←
REVISE OR REJECT	PUBLISH ONLY WITH RESPONSIBLE APPROVAL

The lower row is essential. An AI system cannot validate its own claim merely by rephrasing it. External checks may include a primary source, running a test, asking a relevant expert, testing an interface with people, or choosing not to claim more than the evidence supports.

The critical distinction

Assistance is not authority. A persuasive paragraph, elegant chart or functioning-looking interface may contain errors. “The model said so” is never an adequate final source for a material public claim.

02 / Three worked examples

Example A · An evidence-led essay

Human brief: “Explain why a lower cost of producing drafts does not necessarily make high-quality information easier to find. Separate observation, interpretation and hypothesis.”

Machine use: Request three outlines and two strong objections. Ask for sources, but do not assume returned references exist. Human verification: Open original publications, check dates, remove unsupported causal claims, and rewrite the position in a voice the author endorses.

Pass test: A reader can identify evidence separately from speculation and click through to credible sources. Failure case: Three invented study citations placed below a polished conclusion.

Example B · A small interactive website

Human brief: “Create a keyboard-accessible comparison of two creative workflows. No tracking, no login, no fabricated statistics.” Machine use: Scaffold static HTML, CSS and JavaScript; draft tests and a readme. Human verification: Try every control with a keyboard, check mobile sizing, turn on reduced motion, validate content and inspect all links.

Pass test: The controls change meaningful text; the experience still works when animations are disabled; the deployed route does not overwrite existing assets. Failure case: A vivid mock-up with inert buttons or a broken guide download.

Example C · Learning something difficult

Human brief: “Teach me how caching differs from persistence, with a diagram and a worked example.” Machine use: Provide examples at several levels; quiz the learner. Human verification: Reconstruct the explanation without notes and test a real cache or database workflow.

Pass test: The learner can transfer the idea to a new case. Failure case: A confident feeling of recognition mistaken for independent competence.

03 / When the body meets the browser

A digital workflow can remove some travel requirements while introducing other demands. Accessibility must be treated as a design and resource question, not as a story about technology magically defeating physical constraints.

Potential access gain	What may still block participation
Remote writing, publishing and meetings	Connectivity, accessible formats, social isolation, fatigue, financial cost.
Assistive input and output	Screen-reader support, captions, device compatibility, training and languages.
Asynchronous learning	Time, attention, electricity, quiet space and available support.

Design checklist

Use semantic headings and labels. Make links and buttons focusable with visible focus indicators. Test without a mouse. Support text resizing and narrow screens. Provide transcripts and real downloadable alternatives. Respect prefers-reduced-motion. Never autoplay sound. Avoid equating a person’s online output with their health or worth.

Thought experiment

Pick one activity that usually requires travel: a lecture, a design review, a writing workshop. Which parts can be genuinely remote? Which require physical presence? What does the participant need to participate with dignity rather than merely be counted as connected?

This section is not medical advice and makes no assertion about any named person’s disability or diagnosis. Access needs vary by person, context and environment.

04 / The verification ladder

Different outputs require different checks. A low-stakes metaphor needs editorial judgment. A quotation needs its original context. Deployable code needs tests. Anything affecting safety, legal rights, health or finances may need qualified human review beyond an AI assistant.

Output	Minimum responsible check
A factual claim	Confirm in a credible primary or authoritative source.
A quotation	Compare exact wording and context with the original.
A statistic	Check population, date, definition, source and method.
A citation	Open it. Confirm the publication and that it supports the point.
A script / program	Review permissions, run tests, inspect effects and rollback.
A public interface	Mobile, keyboard, accessibility, broken link and privacy checks.
A personal statement	Confirm the subject has approved that statement.

Common failure modes

Hallucination: fluent invention of a reference, fact or feature. Automation bias: trusting a suggestion because software produced it. False precision: treating arbitrary sliders or generated scores as validated measures. Context collapse: reducing a person or subject to a few prompt lines. Output inflation: mistaking the number of pages made for the amount of value created.

A one-minute pre-publication test

Can I explain the claim in my own words? Can I show where the evidence came from? Do the links and interactions work? Did I check names, consent, licensing and privacy? Would I still stand by this if the model were not mentioned?

05 / Three exercises for makers

Exercise 1 · The three-draft experiment (20 minutes)

Choose one genuine question. Write a 100-word answer before using AI. Ask a model for two competing answers, with uncertainty clearly marked. Compare all three. Circle ideas you can substantiate. Rewrite the answer without copying sentences you cannot defend.

Record: What improved? What became more generic? What evidence did you need? Which claim did you delete?

Exercise 2 · Build, break, repair (30 minutes)

Create a simple interactive page with one question and two answer paths. Generate a test checklist using AI. Try it using only Tab, Enter and Space, then with reduced motion. Intentionally enter surprising values, inspect error behaviour, and fix one genuine flaw.

Record: Which defect was invisible in the initial visual preview? What did testing teach that prompting did not?

Exercise 3 · An access audit (15 minutes)

Pick a task such as applying for a course or reading a PDF. Simulate a constrained context without pretending to replicate an actual disability: narrow phone screen, keyboard-only operation or low bandwidth. List concrete obstacles and available alternatives.

Record: Who is excluded by design decisions? What would make the experience usable for more people?

Reflection prompts

What is the difference between a fast draft and a sound argument? When does assistance become overdelegation? Whose labour or data may be hidden in the system? What should be private? How do you credit work without inventing machine personhood? How will you maintain what you ship?

06 / Further reading and traceable sources

These sources are starting points, not a claim that every sentence in this editorial guide is empirically proved by them. Consult the current originals and evaluate scope before citing them for a specific empirical claim.

NIST AI Risk Management Framework

Guidance on identifying and managing AI-related risks.
https://www.nist.gov/itl/ai-risk-management-framework

UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

Human rights, social impacts, governance and responsibility.
https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence/recommendation-ethics

W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

Testable principles for making web content more accessible.
https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/

W3C WAI Accessibility Fundamentals

Practical introduction to inclusive web development.
https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/

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07 / The pocket publishing checklist

INTENT

☐ I know who this is for and why it exists.

☐ I can name the human decisions behind the work.

EVIDENCE

☐ Important claims have traceable sources.

☐ Quotes, citations and statistical figures were checked.

EXPERIENCE

☐ The page is usable on a phone and with a keyboard.

☐ Reduced motion and text equivalents exist.

☐ Downloads and related links were tested.

ETHICS

☐ I have not invented credentials or personal health information.

☐ I have checked copyright, attribution and privacy.

OPERATIONS

☐ I know how to deploy without damaging existing routes.

☐ I can correct mistakes and maintain the publication.

An entirely reasonable outcome of this checklist is “not ready to publish.” A smaller, accurate work is often more useful than a louder, fragile one.

THE END IS ANOTHER BEGINNING.

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