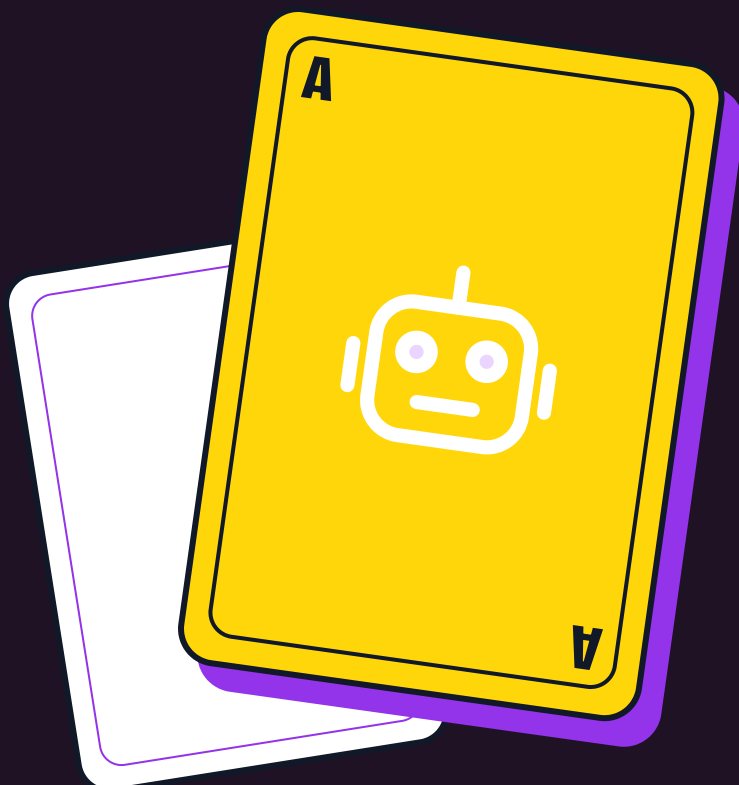


STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE · AI

THE BEST WAYS TO USE AI IN A **SMALL BUSINESS**

AI is at its best on the jobs that quietly eat your week: first drafts, summaries, replies and ideas. According to the ONS, 28% of UK businesses with fewer than 10 employees already use at least one AI technology. Here's where it earns its keep, and where you still need a human eye.

By **Jack Easterbrook** 8 steps 8 min read Updated September 2026



BEFORE YOU START

- ☐ An AI chat tool (a free plan is fine to start)
- ☐ A list of the jobs that take up your week
- ☐ Your tone of voice guide, if you've made one (our prompting guide shows how)
- ☐ Half an hour to try two or three of these

Good to know: Start with low-risk jobs where you'll check everything before it goes out. Leave anything involving customer data until you've read our "AI is a tool, not a replacement" guide.

THE STEPS TICK EACH ONE OFF AS YOU GO

1

Draft emails and enquiry replies

Paste the email, add a line on what you want to say, and ask for a friendly reply in your tone. You edit and send. Brilliant for quotes, follow-ups and awkward replies. Take out names and contact details before you paste.



2

Summarise notes, calls and documents

Turn meeting notes, long email threads or a supplier's terms into a short summary with actions. Ask it to list anything that needs a decision from you.



3

Plan a month of content

Get ideas for social posts, blogs and newsletters built around the questions customers actually ask you, then write them in your own words. Our [30-day marketing planner](#) gives you a month of small jobs to slot them into.



4

Write and improve website copy

Draft service pages, FAQs and meta descriptions, or ask for honest feedback on a current page. You add the real details, examples and proof.



5

Reply to reviews

Get a calm first draft for a tricky review, then make it personal before you post it. Never use AI to write reviews or testimonials for yourself.



6**Write ad variations**

Ask for ten headline options for a Google Ads or Meta campaign, then test the best. Remind it of the limits: Google's responsive search ad headlines allow 30 characters and descriptions 90.



DONE

7**Create templates and first-draft policies**

Job adverts, onboarding checklists, how-to guides for staff and standard emails. Anything legal, like terms and conditions or contracts, still needs a professional check.



DONE

8**Get unstuck with spreadsheets**

Describe what you need ("total sales by month from column C") and ask for the formula plus a plain-English explanation of how it works.



DONE

HOW UK BUSINESSES ARE USING AI

The ONS's June 2026 survey found 28% of businesses with fewer than 10 employees use at least one AI technology, compared with 49% of those with 250 or more. The barriers businesses mention most are working out where to use it, cost and a lack of expertise. The eight jobs above are a free or low-cost place to start on the first one.

BEST-PRACTICE TIPS

A**Start with the dull stuff**

The best first uses are the repetitive jobs you put off, not the creative work you enjoy.

K**Time it**

Note how long a job takes with and without AI. Keep the uses that genuinely save time.

Q**Build a prompt library**

Save prompts that worked in a shared doc so the whole team can reuse them.

J**One tool is enough**

You don't need five subscriptions. Learn one tool well first.

10

Keep people up front

Use AI behind the scenes. Customers still want to deal with you.

9

Check in every few months

Tools change quickly, so look again at what could save you time.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

Is it worth paying for an AI tool?

Try a free plan on real jobs for a couple of weeks first. If you're using it daily or hitting the limits, a paid plan's extra usage and features may well be worth it.

Can AI run my social media for me?

It can plan and draft, but posting without a human check is risky. Real photos, real jobs and your personality are still what make people trust you.

Should I add an AI chatbot to my website?

Only if you can check what it says and it hands over to a person easily. A chatbot quoting wrong prices or making promises is worse than no chatbot.

What shouldn't I use AI for?

Final legal, financial or HR decisions, customer personal data on a personal account, and writing reviews or testimonials. Our "AI is a tool, not a replacement" guide goes into more detail.



Written by Jack Easterbrook

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Sources

- Artificial intelligence in UK businesses: 2023 to 2026 (ONS): <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/businessservices/articles/artificialintelligenceinukbusinesses/2023to2026>
- About responsive search ads (Google Ads Help): <https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/7684791>
- Google Search's guidance on generative AI content (Google Search Central): <https://developers.google.com/search/docs/fundamentals/using-gen-ai-content>

The online version of this guide, with any updates, is at jaedigital.co.uk/advice/ai-for-small-businesses/.

got stuck? no shame in it

SHORT ON TIME? **WORK WITH US.**

This is our day job. Tell us where you got to and we'll pick it up from there, finish it with you, or take the whole thing off your hands. Discovery calls are free and take 30 minutes.

EMAIL JACK

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CALL

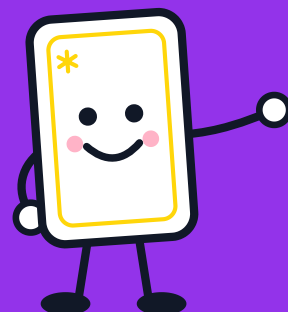
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