PRO.YOUR LIFE

AI as a Creative Tool

Using AI to assist, never to replace, the human creative act.

INTRODUCTION

AI drafts. You finish.

A practical guide to using AI to assist the human creative act, without replacing it.

AI tools can be useful in a creative practice. They can help you brainstorm, sketch, organize, and learn. They can also flatten your voice, cloud your ownership, and quietly move the creative decisions away from you. The difference is in how you use them.

This guide gives you a way to decide when AI helps, when it hurts, and how to keep the work yours.

What you will learn

- Where AI can help, and where the human must lead
- The Back to Human method, step by step
- How to keep ownership of work you make with AI tools
- Lines not to cross
- A checklist for every AI assisted project

IN THIS SERIES

AI as a Creative Tool is Volume 02 of the Pro.Your Life Ethical AI Library. Keep going with **Ethical AI Principles** (Volume 01) and **Reading a Dataset** (Volume 03), free at proyourlife.org.

ONE

Assist, never replace

Think of AI as an assistant in the studio, not the artist. Give it tasks. Keep the decisions.

WHERE AI CAN HELP

- Brainstorming ideas, titles, and directions
- Generating rough references and sketches to react to
- Organizing notes, files, and schedules
- Cleaning up audio or images in routine ways
- Explaining techniques while you learn
- Making work more accessible, such as captions and transcripts

WHERE THE HUMAN LEADS

- Taste: what is good, and what is yours
- Story, meaning, and intent
- Your voice, culture, and perspective
- Performance and feel
- Every final creative decision
- Anything with your name on it

> If you could not explain every creative choice in the finished piece, AI made too many of them.

TWO

The Back to Human method

Our flagship music program works like this: AI writes the first draft. You finish the song. The same method works for any medium.

01 **Generate a draft.**
Use an AI tool to create a rough starting point: a loop, a sketch, a paragraph, a mood board.

02 **Deconstruct it.**
Take it apart. What works? What is generic? What sounds like everyone else? Name it out loud.

03 **Keep only what serves you.**
Most of the draft should go. Keep the spark, if there is one, and cut the rest.

04 **Rebuild it human.**
Remake the work with your own hands, instruments, voice, and choices. Replace generated parts with performed ones.

05 **Own it.**
Document your process: save drafts, stems, and notes that show your creative decisions. Credit collaborators. Disclose AI use where it matters.

WHY IT WORKS

The draft removes the fear of the blank page. The rebuild puts the craft, the culture, and the authorship back in human hands, which is where the value and the ownership live.

THREE

Keep the work yours

AI raises new ownership questions. A few habits answer most of them.

Human authorship

In the United States, copyright protects work created by humans. Material generated by AI without meaningful human creative control cannot be registered. When you register a work that includes AI generated material, you are expected to disclose it and claim only the human authored parts. The more of the work that is truly yours, the stronger your ownership.

Read the tool's terms

- Who owns what you upload, and what the tool generates?
- Can the company use your inputs to train its models? Can you turn that off?
- Are there limits on commercial use of outputs?
- What happens to your files if you cancel?

Document your process

Save your drafts, project files, and stems. Note which parts were generated and which you made. This record supports your authorship if it is ever questioned, and it makes honest disclosure easy.

FOUR

Lines not to cross

Some uses of AI harm other creators, even when a tool makes them easy.

01 **Do not feed in other people's work without permission.**
Uploading someone else's song, art, or writing to imitate or remix it can infringe their rights and undercut their living.

02 **Do not clone a voice or likeness without consent.**
A person's voice and face belong to them. Many states protect them by law.

03 **Do not imitate a living artist's style to replace them.**
Learning from influences is part of every tradition. Generating work designed to substitute for a specific artist is not.

04 **Do not pass off generated work as fully human made.**
Be honest with collaborators, clients, and audiences about how the work was made.

CHECKLIST

Before you use AI on a project

Run through this list at the start of any AI assisted work.

- ☐ I know what task I am giving the AI, and what decisions I am keeping.
- ☐ I read the tool's terms on ownership, training, and commercial use.
- ☐ I turned off training on my inputs, if the tool allows it.
- ☐ I am not uploading anyone else's work, voice, or likeness without permission.
- ☐ I am saving drafts and notes that show my creative choices.
- ☐ The finished work reflects my taste, voice, and culture.
- ☐ I will disclose AI use where it matters: to clients, collaborators, and the Copyright Office.
- ☐ I would be proud to put my name on the result.

> AI writes the first draft. You finish the song.
>
> BACK TO HUMAN

STAY IN THE WORK

Build, protect, and sustain your creative work.

Pro.Your Life is a nonprofit creative trust helping artists and creatives build, protect, and sustain their work in a technology driven world without losing ownership, culture, or humanity. We publish free educational resources, host workshops, and are building a global creative trust for the age of AI. Join the founding community at proyourlife.org.

This resource is education, not legal advice. Every contract and every situation is different. When real money or real rights are on the line, talk to a lawyer who works with creatives.

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