

Can I put this into AI?

A decision card for one person. Print it, or keep it open in a tab for the first month.

This advises you, not your organization. Where it touches company policy, policy wins — if your employer has written data rules, those are the answer and this card is just a way of remembering them.

Start here: which account are you using?

This is the question almost nobody asks first, and it changes everything below.

ACCOUNT	WHAT IT USUALLY MEANS
Company-provided (Team, Enterprise, or a tool your employer set up)	There is an agreement covering your data. Follow the written rules.
Your own personal account , free or paid	You are the data agreement. Assume anything you paste may be retained.

Paying for a personal plan does **not** make it a work account. That's the most common mistake, and it's an easy one to make — the interface looks identical.

The decision

Work down. Stop at the first row that matches.

IF THE MATERIAL...	THEN
Is already public — published pages, press releases, your own blog	Go ahead.
Names a customer, client, patient, student, or applicant	Stop. Don't paste it. Not a judgment call.
Contains credentials, keys, or anything that would let someone log in	Stop. Never, on any account.
Is unreleased — financials, strategy, an unannounced product	Stop unless your written rules explicitly permit it.
Is about a named colleague — performance, health, a complaint	Stop. Talk to a person instead.
Is internal but unremarkable — a process note, a draft agenda	Only on a company-provided account , and only if your rules allow it.

IF THE MATERIAL...	THEN
You genuinely can't classify	Ask. See the script below.

"Can I just remove the names?"

Sometimes. Not always, and not by default.

Only if your written data rules explicitly allow sanitized material. Otherwise, stop and ask. Whether de-identified data is permitted is a decision your organization makes, not one you can make on its behalf — and re-identification is easier than it looks when the surrounding detail is specific.

If you do sanitize: remove names, account numbers, dates, locations, and job titles. A "small anonymized case" that mentions the one client in Reykjavík is not anonymized.

When you can't tell, ask like this

Short, specific, and answerable. Vague questions get no reply.

Hi — I'd like to use [tool] for [specific task, e.g. "summarizing my own meeting notes"]. Before I do, can you confirm:

1. Is [tool] approved for work use?
2. What categories of information must never go into it?
3. Is there a difference between the company account and a personal one?

Happy to work from public or made-up material until I hear back.

That last line matters. It lets you keep going without waiting, and it makes clear you're not asking for permission to take a risk.

While you're waiting for an answer

You can do real work with none of the above:

- Public material — anything already on the open web.
- Made-up material with the same shape as the real thing.
- Your own words — a draft you wrote, an email you're about to send, your own notes.
- General questions with no company detail: *"what usually goes in a project brief?"*

That's enough to get competent. The confidential material can wait for the written answer.

Related reading: Shadow AI: You're Probably Using AI Your Company Never Approved and Do You Have to Tell People You Used AI?