

Protect these skills

A worksheet. Twenty minutes, once, then revisit it every six months.

The premise: skill erosion isn't caused by using AI a lot. It's caused by trusting it more than you check it, on tasks you've quietly stopped doing yourself. What decays is the thing you stop doing *entirely* — not the thing you hand over and then review.

So the choice is which skills to keep. Made deliberately, that's a strategy. Made by default, the skills you lose are simply whichever were easiest to hand over, which has nothing to do with which were worth keeping.

Step 1 — Name two or three. No more.

You cannot defend every skill and you shouldn't try.

Write down the two or three that are genuinely load-bearing for *your* career. Not the ones you enjoy — the ones that, if they went, would change what you're worth.

Useful prompts if you're stuck:

- What do people come to *you* for?
- Which judgment would your manager not currently trust to anyone else?
- If you changed employer, what would you be hired for?

#	THE SKILL	WHY IT'S LOAD-BEARING FOR ME
1		
2		
3		

If you wrote more than three, cut it back. A list of eight is a list of none — you'll defend nothing.

Step 2 — Everything else is fair game

Write down three things you're happy to hand over completely and stop being able to do well.

This half matters as much as the first. Treating all erosion as loss is how you end up doing unnecessary work to preserve something nobody needs — nobody mourns their mental arithmetic, and the attention AI frees up is real.

#	HAPPY TO OFFLOAD	
1		
2		
3		

Step 3 — For the protected ones only, change how you work

Three habits. They cost time, and that's the point — you're paying for retention.

Draft first, then compare. Write your own rough version before you look at the AI's. Five minutes and a rough shape is enough. Then ask for its version and find where they differ. Every difference is either something you missed or something it got wrong, and working out which *is* the exercise.

Ask it to critique, not to produce. *"Here's my draft. What's the weakest argument in it, and what would a skeptical reader push back on?"* gets a better result than *"write this for me"* and leaves the thinking where it was.

Keep one task deliberately AI-free. Pick the single thing you most want to stay sharp at and don't hand any of it over. Not forever — just while you're working out where your line is.

PROTECTED SKILL	WHICH HABIT I'M USING	STARTING WHEN
1		
2		
3		

Step 4 — The warning light

Research on people working alongside automated systems finds the same pattern every time: the better the system usually is, the less carefully people check it.

So the signal to watch isn't how much AI you use. It's this:

When did you last disagree with something it produced?

If you can't remember, you've stopped reading the output properly — and that, not usage volume, is when the skill starts going.

Put a reminder in your calendar for six months from now with that one question in it.

Related reading: [AI Skill Erosion: How to Use It Without Getting Worse at Your Job](#)