

CHAPTER 6 - CATCHING AI WHEN IT'S WRONG

The SIFT Card

A four-step habit for catching AI when it is wrong, in well under two minutes.

The SIFT method, developed by Mike Caulfield, gives you a simple way to evaluate information before trusting it. RCTF helps you get better answers. SIFT helps you know whether those answers deserve your trust.

S**Stop**

Before you act on anything AI gives you, pause for a moment. Do not let a confident tone rush you.

I**Investigate**

Look closely at what is actually being claimed. Is there a specific number, date, name, or quote?

F**Find Better**

If something matters, go find a real source to check it against.

T**Trace**

Follow the logic from start to finish. Does the reasoning actually hold together?

Run a Real Answer Through SIFT

What AI told me:

Stop. Investigate: what exactly is being claimed, and is there a source attached?

Find Better: where did I check it, and what did I find?

Trace: does the reasoning actually hold together end to end?

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SIFT, Plus Two, For Your Highest-Stakes Work

A board presentation, a legal filing, a client-facing recommendation. Run the same four steps, then add these two.

5**Second Set of Eyes**

Show the output, and what you checked, to one person who was not involved in creating it.

6**Leave a Trail**

Write one line noting what you verified and how.

Make SIFT automatic for these

Any number, statistic, or date.

Any quote or claim attributed to a specific source.

Anything you are about to send to a client, your manager, or anyone outside your own head.

Anything where being wrong would truly embarrass you or cost something real.

A Worked Example

A consultant named Rohan once dropped a confident, specific statistic straight into a client slide without checking it. It turned out to be entirely invented.

Rohan's statistic, run through SIFT

Stop: before pasting it straight into the slide. Just that pause.

Investigate: noticing it had no source attached at all.

Find Better: spending two minutes searching for the actual study.

Trace: asking whether the number even matched the rest of the report's argument.

Think of SIFT as your seatbelt. You wear it because the few times something does go wrong, it matters.