



# The Reasoning Trail Guide

## 1. What is a Reasoning Trail?

A Reasoning Trail is the evidence of your thinking while using AI. It proves that you were the **Pilot** and the AI was the **Engine**. Without a trail, your work is a "Black Box" that cannot be trusted or graded fairly.

## 2. How to Build Your Trail

### 2.1. The Intentional Prompt

Don't just say "Write an essay about X."

**Augmented move:** Provide the AI with your notes, a specific thesis, and a list of constraints.

*Example:* "I am writing an essay on the fall of the Roman Empire focusing on economic inflation. Here are my notes from Chapter 4. Please outline three arguments I could make, but do not use generic explanations."

### 2.2. The Critical Critique

When the AI gives you an answer, **it is probably 20% wrong or shallow.**

Find the gaps:

- Is a citation missing?
- Is the tone too "cheesy" or robotic?
- Did it ignore a key piece of data you provided?
- **Document this:** "The AI suggested the inflation was due to X, but my textbook says it was actually Y. I had to correct this in the next prompt."

### 2.3. The Human Intervention

Show where you changed the output.



- Did you rewrite a paragraph in your own voice?
- Did you combine two different AI suggestions into one new idea?
- This is where the **learning** happens.

## 2.4. The Final Polish

The final product should reflect your **Subject Matter Expertise (SME)**.

- Fact-check every date, name, and statistic.
- Ensure the logic flows correctly.

## 3. Why do I have to do this?

1. **To Protect Your Grade:** If your work looks "too good," your teacher might suspect cheating. The Reasoning Trail proves you did the work.
2. **To Build Real Skills:** You aren't learning how to prompt; you are learning how to **think** with a powerful tool.
3. **To Reduce Verification Debt:** Your teacher can grade your work faster and with more confidence.