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What happens to what you type into an AI service: reading the data terms

AI in Your Business

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What happens to what you type into an AI service: reading the data terms

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When you type into an AI service, the text leaves your computer or phone and goes to the provider's servers. What happens next (whether it is stored, for how long, whether anyone reads it, whether it is used to train the model) **is written in that service's terms and privacy policy**, and it differs between tools, between plans and over time. Before pasting customer data in, look for six points.

The six points to look for

Question	Where to look	An answer that should alert you
Do they use what I type to train their models?	Terms, privacy policy, account settings	"Yes, by default" on a free account. Many services have an option to switch it off; look for it.
How long do they keep conversations?	Privacy policy and settings	No defined period, or "to improve the service".
Does anyone read the conversations?	Terms and policy	Human review "for safety and quality" is common; see whether you can opt out.
Where is the data kept?	Policy, data processing addendum	Countries that your customer or your sector's law does not accept.
Can I delete everything?	Account settings, deletion request	No way to delete, or long delays.
Are there sub-processors?	List of sub-processors, if any	A long list with no notice of changes.

The terms for **business accounts and API access** are often different from those of free consumer accounts, usually with more control over the data. Do not assume: read the ones for the plan you will use.

What to do, step by step

1. **Decide first which data never leaves.** Passwords, API keys, bank details, identity documents, health data and customer lists do not go into AI tools. See **what never to type into an AI**.

2. **Open the account's data settings** and switch off whatever lets conversations be used for training, if the option exists.

3. **Use work accounts** for work, not each person's personal account, so you can control and delete.

4. **Take the names out.** To ask for a summary of a case, swap names and numbers for "Customer A" and "Amount X". You get the same result.

5. **Tell your customers,** in the privacy policy, that you use AI providers, when their data passes through. See **data protection on your site**.

Data protection law applies to you, not to the provider.
If you paste customers' personal data into a tool, your company answers for it. If you are unsure what your country's law requires, talk to a professional; a general article does not replace one.

For data that cannot leave, the alternative is to **run the model on your own computer or server**. The data stays with you, but the quality and the upkeep are different. See **running models on your VPS**.

RECOMMENDED

Want the team to know what can and cannot be pasted into an AI? Write a one-page policy.

See how to write one →

SEE ALSO

- **A one-page AI policy for your team** →
- **How to use AI on your phone, and what never to type into it** →
- **Personal data protection: what applies to your website** →

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