

AI DRY JANUARY



THE #AIJANUARY CHEAT SHEET

Erin McCormick | TheInspireLab.ai



**You don't have to *love* AI.
But you do have to *learn* it.
We make it easy (and painless).**





You've probably heard of *Dry January* - where people skip the alcohol and start the year fresh.

I put a spin on it: *AI January*. Change things up for a month about AI. Strong start to the year.

Every day, I pulled a ping pong ball from a martini glass. Each one had an AI tip. Some for work. Some for life. Some just to make you say "wait... AI can do THAT?"

31 days. 31 tips.

This Cheat Sheet Guide organizes all of it by color so you can skip the overwhelm and get straight to what helps. **Click on any ball in the guide to see the video tip.**

-  Blue = Safety & setup (start here if you're new or using AI at work)
-  Green = Work wins
-  Yellow = Life wins
-  Pink = My favorites

You don't need all 31. You need one win.
Pick a color. Pick a tip. Try it.

Let's go!



#AIJANUARY



31 DAYS

- Basics & Safety
- Work Wins
- Life Wins
- My Favorites

Click on any ball to see the video tip.

Tip: Open links in a new tab/window so your guide stays open. (Right-click → "Open Weblink in Browser.")

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6

DAY 7	DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10	DAY 11	DAY 12

DAY 13	DAY 14	DAY 15	DAY 16	DAY 17	DAY 18

DAY 19	DAY 20	DAY 21	DAY 22	DAY 23	DAY 24

DAY 25	DAY 26	DAY 27	DAY 28	DAY 29	DAY 30

	DAY 31
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GROUPED BY TOPIC



01 BASICS Safety & Set-up

Start here. A few quick settings + habits that make AI more useful (and safer) right away.



02 WORK WINS Day to day uses

The stuff that makes you say “wait... AI can do that?”
Scattered notes → quick summaries, chaos → clarity,
busywork → done.



03 LIFE WINS Personal uses

Quick wins for real life: meals, outfits, travel, and
the little mindset boosts that keep you moving.



04 POWER PICKS Erin’s favorites

Some of my go-to favorites. The big and small
ways AI can help you every day.





BASICS - SAFETY & SETUP

Click on any ball to see the video tip.

Tip: Open links in a new tab/window so your guide stays open. (Right-click → "Open Weblink in Browser.")

PROTECT YOURSELF

DAY 1

PROTECT YOURSELF - Start with **Settings** in every tool. Turn off anything related to "training the model," history, sharing, and connected apps so you're not accidentally giving away more than you mean to. **This is the quickest way to reduce risk and is a MUST for every AI tool.** [WATCH VIDEO](#)

FREE VS. PAID

DAY 2

FREE VS. PAID - Free is great for testing, but paid is worth it if you want better features, higher limits, or work-friendly controls. Free is like getting a brand-new intern every day. Smart, but you're re-explaining everything from scratch. Paid AI is when it starts feeling like a right-hand person: faster, more consistent, it knows you and is actually usable throughout the day for real work. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

GET STARTED

DAY 5

GET STARTED - People get stuck on how to start with AI. It can feel so overwhelming. Apps? Browsers? Which tool? Where do I even begin? This tip helps you get started without overthinking it, and one small decision that can save you a headache later. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

PROJECTS VS. CHATS

DAY 6

PROJECTS VS. CHATS - Ever feel like you keep starting over with AI? Explaining the same things. Crafting the same prompts about your company... what you're working on... uploading the same files over and over. There's a better way. You don't have to start new every time. Projects fix that. Use chats for quick one-offs; use projects when you want things organized and reusable. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

LITTLE SHORTCUTS

DAY 7

LITTLE SHORTCUTS - At the end of first week we give you 7 ways to make AI a little easier. We'll show you how to find chats faster, stop endless scrolling, and make ongoing work easier. Small changes. Less headaches. [WATCH VIDEO](#)





BASICS - SAFETY & SETUP

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GUARDRAILS

DAY 8

GUARDRAILS - AI is already showing up at work, whether or not you have a policy. You need clear guardrails: simple rules that protect your company and still let teams move fast. What not to upload. Why settings matter. AI drafts. Humans decide. Decide what's okay to paste, what should be anonymized, and what should never go in. Guardrails turn AI from risky to responsible.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

DAY 9

GETTING TO KNOW YOU - Build a mini assistant that understands your voice, your brand, and your go-to formats (emails, sales decks, onboarding docs). You'll spend less time re-explaining yourself and get results that sound like you, faster. Plus solve the version control problem. Always have the latest version of a document instantly. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

DON'T LIE TO ME

DAY 19

DON'T LIE TO ME - AI can sound confident, even when it's filling in gaps (or making things up!) It's called *hallucinations*. You can set defaults, instructions and best practices to ensure the data is accurate. Ask. Don't assume. Get sample prompts. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE

DAY 24

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE - Most companies are using AI the same way they use Google. Ask a question. Get an answer. Move on. That's useful, but it's not the advantage. AI isn't just a tool. It's changing how work gets done. The companies seeing real results aren't chasing tools. They're changing behavior. [WATCH VIDEO](#)





WORK WINS

Click on any ball to see the video tip.

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TALK TO ME

DAY 4

TALK TO ME - You don't have to type everything into AI. You can just... talk. Voice chat is a great way to use AI, especially when you need to be hands free: Driving, Walking, Practicing a pitch, Thinking out loud. You talk. It listens. You go back and forth. And when you're done? The conversation is transcribed so you can grab the key points. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

WHITEBOARD MAGIC

DAY 12

WHITEBOARD MAGIC - Strategy meetings. Big ideas. Flip charts and sticky notes everywhere. And then... what happens? Too often, it all stays on the wall, or in someone's notebook, and momentum fades. Today's WOW is about what happens after the meeting. How those ideas actually turn into action, with clarity around who's doing what and what comes next - and save you hours from putting it all together. [WATCH VIDEO](#)



BIZ CARD MAGIC

DAY 13

BUSINESS CARD MAGIC - You meet great people at an event or conference. You have good conversations. Then life happens and you're staring at a pile of business cards... dreading all the sorting through and follow-up. Today's WOW fixes that. One tap. A few spoken notes. Everything you need to follow up... handled. This is one of those "why hasn't this existed?" moments. [WATCH VIDEO](#)



MAGIC HELP DESK

DAY 14

MAGIC HELP DESK - This is one of those AI things I use all the time, but people don't realize it's possible. I've used it in meetings, during talks, and in everyday moments when tech should be simple... and isn't. Not fancy. Not technical. Just incredibly useful. Easily get instant answers to everyday tech questions and more. [WATCH VIDEO](#)



COPY THAT

DAY 15

COPY THAT - You probably haven't thought about this but... how do you move things between your phone and computer? Email yourself? Text yourself? AirDrop? There's a faster way that most people don't realize they already have. You'll wonder why you didn't think of this sooner! [WATCH VIDEO](#)





WORK WINS



ANALYZE THIS

DAY 16

ANALYZE THIS - "Don't put sensitive data into AI." So... where's the value? If AI can't touch real numbers, names, or client data, how is it supposed to do real analysis? Short answer: it can. And it can do it safely. AI isn't about exposing data, it's about designing smarter workflows. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

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007 AGENTS

DAY 18

007 AGENTS - Most people use AI like Google. Ask a question. Get an answer. That's useful, but it's not what's changing work. The real shift is when AI starts acting like an assistant: handling steps, preparing drafts, moving work forward, with a human still reviewing and approving. That's what people mean by agentic AI. *James Bond turns out to be a pretty good metaphor for this.*

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

TEAM NOT TOOLS

DAY 20

TEAM NOT TOOLS - There are thousands of cool AI tools. But small businesses shouldn't start there. AI success is about your team: Where is time getting wasted? What's stuck? What are the bottlenecks? Today's tip: Ask your team one question: "What's the most annoying, repeated time waster we do every week?" Pick ONE. That's your first quick win. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

WHAT'S THE VIBE?

DAY 21

WHAT'S THE VIBE? - Ever heard of vibe coding? It's not about being technical. It's about how you work with AI. You describe the tool you want to build in plain language, you give AI "the vibe" of what you want, and it builds it. Yes there is back and forth, but you don't have to be a programmer to build things. Once you see how to direct it, AI gets a lot more useful, especially for non-techies. [WATCH VIDEO](#)





LIFE WINS

Click on any ball to see the video tip.

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WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

DAY 3

WHAT'S FOR DINNER? You're standing in front of the fridge. Door open. Just... staring. Here's a trick. Take a photo of your fridge. Your freezer. Your pantry. Upload them to ChatGPT or Claude and ask: "What can I make for dinner with this?" Then get specific: Under 20 minutes, Kid-friendly, Dairy-free. It gives you recipes and ideas based on what you actually have in the house. AI isn't just for work, it can help with life, too. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

GET IN THE GAME

DAY 10

GET IN THE GAME - January is football energy. Momentum matters. You don't win playoff games, or in business, by waiting to adjust. Blockbuster waited. Kodak waited. BlackBerry waited. What are YOU waiting for? AI January is about showing you that AI is here and it's not as hard as you think. We help make it easy. You don't need weeks of classes or fancy all-day offsites. (Who has time for that?) We do short breakfast or lunch sessions. In a few hours, not weeks, you'll start seeing meaningful change. (People have to eat anyway.) And for qualifying Massachusetts companies... It. Is. Free. [WATCH VIDEO](#)



I LOVE THOSE BOOTS

DAY 11

I LOVE THOSE BOOTS - See something you love? Shoes. A building. A piece of furniture. What if you could find out what it is, where to buy it, the history behind it, and more, in seconds? You download the Google app and use Google Lens. Then you just point your phone at something and instantly know what it is and where to get it. [WATCH VIDEO](#)





LIFE WINS



NOTHING TO WEAR

DAY 17

NOTHING TO WEAR - I hate packing. I always overpack... and still feel like I have nothing to wear. This fixed that. Turn AI into your own little stylist. Take pictures of clothes thrown on your bed that you're thinking of packing. AI will put together your outfits for the week and let you know what you forget to pack - or can leave at home! [WATCH VIDEO](#)

Click on any ball to see the video tip.

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WHERE IN THE WORLD

DAY 27

WHERE IN THE WORLD - The freezing temps and thousands of cancelled flights, inspired me to test something. Could AI magically find better deals than search filters? Answer: not really. Voice did make it way easier (and faster) to get clear on what I wanted (budget, nonstop, on the water, the right vibe) That's the real win: less scrolling, faster decisions. But still a lot of back and forth. It was more like... my travel brainstorming buddy than quick ticket agent. Helpful, just not as "wow" as I was hoping for. What are you using for travel planning and rebooking? ChatGPT, Google Flights, Hopper, Expedia, something else? [WATCH VIDEO](#)

JUST SHOW UP

DAY 30

JUST SHOW UP - A big part of success in life isn't talent or tools, it's showing up consistently. That's what I did this month with AI January: tried things, built momentum and pushed myself outside my comfort zone. You can do this when it comes to AI. Small steps taken consistently. [WATCH VIDEO](#)





POWER PICKS

Click on any ball to see the video tip.

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3 C'S

DAY 22

3 C'S - It's been 3 weeks of AI tips every day. There is a lot! It can feel overwhelming! But my tip for today: Don't try and use 25 different AI tools. I use three - all day, every day. ChatGPT, Claude, and Canva. Then I started adding more as needed. Pick a couple you like and actually learn them. Get comfortable. That's where AI starts saving time instead of creating noise. You can use this series to help nudge you along. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

GAMMA.
APP

DAY 23

GAMMA.APP - Most people think AI creates finished work. What it really does well? Turn messy notes into a strong first draft. I used Gamma to go from rough notes → a clean presentation structure. Still needs review. Still needs judgment. But it saved real time. AI drafts. Humans decide. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

AI-POWERED
WOMEN

DAY 25

AI-POWERED WOMEN - One of my favorite AI resources isn't a tool, it's a community: AI-Powered Women. Because learning AI alone can feel overwhelming. When you learn with others - asking questions, sharing what's working and what's not - everything clicks faster. AI isn't about having all the answers. It's about having a place to learn. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

EVERYDAY
STUFF
DESIGN

DAY 26

EVERYDAY STUFF - DESIGN - Thought I'd show you some of the ways I use AI every day. Today I used ChatGPT Images and NanoBanana to design a new Zoom background, so meetings feel more focused and professional. AI doesn't have to be big or complicated. Sometimes it just helps clean things up so you can show up better in everyday work. That's a win.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)





POWER PICKS

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DRAG & DROP

DAY 28

DRAG & DROP - Low-tech tip that feels like a cheat code: Take a screenshot → when the little preview pops up, drag it right into ChatGPT. Now you can get help on the exact thing you’re looking at (an email, a form, a confusing new software tool) without installing any browser extensions or giving AI full access to take action on your computer. It’s basically an over-the-shoulder helper, but you control what it sees and what it can do. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

E-SCORE

DAY 29

E-SCORE - Communication gaps. Slow decisions. Back-to-back meetings. Busywork that gets in the way of high-value work. We know these things hurt productivity and morale, but it's hard to put a dollar number on it. And even harder to know where to start to fix it. So, I had AI help me build a simple way to make it measurable. I built an E-Score that looks at five essentials: *Engaged • Effective • Empowered • Entrepreneurial • Enjoyment* Then I paired it with an ROI calculator to estimate what those gaps are costing in time and money, so you can prioritize the first 2–3 fixes. We hear a lot about “soft skills,” “human skills,” “AI skills”... I think they’re all just skills. And improving them helps your team and your bottom line. Take a peek.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

ONE PAIN.
ONE PROMPT.

DAY 31

ONE PAIN. ONE PROMPT. - I tried to do a scroll of the 30 days of posts... and yep, it goes by way too fast. But that’s kind of the point: you don’t need to absorb everything. You just need one win. Here’s the challenge: Pick ONE thing that’s a pain (follow-up emails, meeting notes, proposals, packing list, job post, SOP... whatever). Pick ONE AI tool you already have. Ask AI to give you 3 ways AI can help. Then ask it to walk you through the fastest option. And then try it! [WATCH VIDEO](#)





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What's Next?

You made it through 31 tips. But here's the truth: tips don't change anything. Action does.

Know someone who needs this? A colleague. Your boss. A friend running a small business. Share this with anyone who's been meaning to "figure out AI" but hasn't started yet. Sometimes all people need is someone to hand them the shortcut.

If you're ready to go deeper - for yourself or your team - here's how we can help.

The AI Readiness Package

60-90 minute hands-on sessions. Practical. In-Person. No jargon. We come to you and get your team using AI, not just talking about it. We focus on the ABCs:

- **A - Alignment:** what AI is for (and not for), plus safety and security basics, and to get everyone on the same page
- **B - Bottlenecks:** start with current pain points and see some quick wins
- **C - Culture:** establish new rules and shared ways of working so it sticks

For MA small companies, this is 100% reimbursable through state workforce programs. Yes, really. We'll show you how.

About Erin

Erin Moran McCormick is the founder of TheInspireLab.ai, where she helps businesses move from AI confusion to confidence - without the jargon or the overwhelm.

She started three companies, was CIO twice, and ran Innovation & Entrepreneurship Centers at Babson and UMass Boston. Erin was employee #1 at a proptech startup and helped grow it to a multimillion-dollar valuation. She's worked with teams at Amazon, Comcast, and The Kraft Group, holds certificates from MIT and Stanford, and is the author of Year of Action.

Her take on AI? You don't have to *love* it. But you do have to *learn* it. And it doesn't have to take forever or be overwhelming. Set up a quick 15-min chat with Erin to learn more.

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[Book a 15-min call to learn more.](#)

