Spotting Repetitive Work That a Generative AI Course Can Help You Automate

Why Look for Repetitive Tasks First

Professionals who attend a generative AI course often arrive with a vague hope that the technology will save them time. But the real productivity gain comes from being precise about what you hand over to the machine. Not every boring task is a good candidate for generative AI, and not every good candidate is obvious at first glance. The trick is to look systematically at your daily workflow and separate the tasks that are genuinely repetitive from those that only feel that way because you do them often. Once you know where the real repetition lives, you can map it directly to what a generative AI tool does well: pattern recognition, text generation, summarisation, and basic reasoning over structured data.

Many people start by thinking about the biggest time sinks in their week. That is a useful first pass, but it can miss the smaller, frequent actions that add up to hours. A better approach is to keep a simple log for a few days. Write down every action you take more than once - replying to the same kind of email, filling in a status report, pulling data from one system and pasting it into another, updating a spreadsheet with similar entries each time. The goal is to find tasks that follow a pattern, not tasks that require deep judgment or creative thinking every time.



When you later take a generative AI course, you will learn how to build a small application that can handle these patterned tasks. The course at United Ceres College, for example, focuses on helping professionals build and deploy a simple generative AI application in two days. That kind of hands-on workshop works best when you come with a clear idea of the problem you want to solve. Identifying those problems ahead of time is the preparation that makes the course time pay off.

Step 1: List Every Task You Do More Than Once a Week

Start with a simple inventory. Take a blank document and write down every task you perform at least twice in a typical week. Do not filter yet. Include the obvious ones - writing weekly status updates, answering common customer questions, formatting reports - and the small ones like renaming files, copying data between tools, or generating standard meeting notes. The size of the task does not matter at this stage. What matters is the repetition.

Watch out for tasks that you have automated partially already. If you use a template for an email but still fill in the details by hand each time, that is a candidate. If you run a macro to format a spreadsheet but still decide what data goes in, that is another. Partial automation

often signals a task that could be fully handed off if the tool were a little smarter. Generative AI is good at filling in templates with variable content, so those half-automated tasks are often the easiest wins.

Also pay attention to tasks that involve reading and summarising. If you regularly scan long documents, emails, or reports to pull out key points, that is a pattern. Generative AI models can read text and produce a concise summary, saving you the minutes each time. The same goes for tasks that require you to rephrase or rewrite content for different audiences - a common need in marketing, HR, and client-facing roles.



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Step 2: Separate Pattern from Judgment

Once you have your list, go through each task and ask one question: does this task follow a predictable pattern, or does it require a unique decision each time? A predictable pattern means the input and output have a consistent structure. For example, a customer support ticket that always asks for an order status and a tracking number has a pattern. The reply can follow a template, with the specific order number and name filled in. A task that requires you to interpret a customer's tone and decide whether to escalate needs human judgment.

This is where many people misjudge. They look at a task that involves writing and assume it needs creativity. But a lot of business writing is surprisingly formulaic. Status emails, progress reports, meeting summaries, and even first drafts of proposals follow a structure. Generative AI can produce a strong first draft that you then edit. The editing step still uses your judgment, but the repetitive generation is gone.

Watch out for tasks that mix pattern and judgment in the same step. A common example is data entry that also requires you to check for errors. The data entry part is a pattern; the error checking is judgment. In cases like this, you can automate the entry and keep the review step. The generative AI tool writes the data into the system, and you check the result. That still saves time because the machine does the typing, and you only do the thinking.

Step 3: Estimate the Time Cost of Each Candidate

Now narrow your list to the tasks that are both repetitive and pattern-based. For each one, estimate how many times you do it per week and how many minutes each instance takes. Multiply them to get a weekly time cost. This is not about precise figures; rough numbers are enough to show you where the biggest returns are. A task that takes five minutes but happens 20 times a week costs nearly two hours. A task that takes 30 minutes but happens once a

week costs half an hour. The high-frequency, short-duration tasks are often the ones people overlook because each instance feels small.

Consider also the cognitive cost. Some tasks are quick but mentally draining because they are boring and require constant attention to avoid mistakes. Generative AI does not get bored. It will perform the same pattern accurately every time, as long as the input is clean. That consistency can reduce errors and free up your mental energy for work that actually needs you.

At this point you should have a shortlist of three to five tasks that are good candidates. These are the ones you will try to automate when you attend a generative AI course. The course will teach you how to build an application, but the application needs a clear specification. Your shortlist is that specification.

Step 4: Check Whether the Task Has Clean Inputs and Outputs

Generative AI works best when the data it receives is structured or at least predictable. If the input to your task is a messy email thread with attachments and handwritten notes, the AI will struggle. If the input is a standard form, a spreadsheet row, or a clearly written request, the AI will handle it easily. For each task on your shortlist, look at the typical input. Can you describe it as a set of fields? For example, a customer enquiry might have fields like name, order number, enquiry type, and message. If you can list those fields, the input is structured enough.



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The output matters too. What should the AI produce? A short email, a paragraph, a filled-in template, a summary? The output should be something the AI can generate from the input without needing to invent new information. If the output requires facts that are not in the input, you will need to connect the AI to a database or a knowledge base. That is possible, but it adds complexity. For a first automation project, choose a task where the input contains everything the AI needs to produce the output.

Watch out for tasks where the input varies wildly in format. A task that sometimes gets data from a web form, sometimes from a PDF, and sometimes from a handwritten note is harder to automate. You can still do it, but you may need to pre-process the inputs into a standard format first. That pre-processing step itself could be repetitive, and you might decide to automate that too. For the scope of a two-day course, aim for a task with a clean, consistent input format.

Step 5: Plan for the Human-in-the-Loop

Even after you automate a task, you will still need to check the output. Generative AI is not perfect. It can misinterpret instructions, produce plausible-sounding but wrong answers, or miss subtle context. The goal is not to eliminate human oversight but to reduce the time you spend on the mechanical part of the task. Plan to spend a few seconds or a minute reviewing each output before you send it or save it.

This review step is also where you can improve the AI's performance over time. When you spot an error, ask yourself what caused it. Was the input unclear? Was the prompt you gave the AI missing a detail? Did the AI misunderstand a term? Each correction teaches you how to write better instructions. Over a few weeks, the error rate drops and the review time shrinks. The key is to start simple. Pick the easiest task on your shortlist and automate that first. Once it is running smoothly, move to the next one.

The generative AI course at United Ceres College is designed to give you the hands-on experience to build that first application. By the time you arrive, you will already know which task you want to tackle. That preparation turns the course from a general introduction into a practical problem-solving session. You leave not just with knowledge but with a working tool that saves you time from day one.

What to Watch for Along the Way

As you go through these steps, keep an eye on a few common pitfalls. The first is overestimating what generative AI can do. It is excellent at language tasks but poor at tasks that require precise calculations, strict logical rules, or access to real-time data from multiple sources. If your task needs arithmetic with no errors, use a spreadsheet or a script, not a language model.



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The second pitfall is underestimating the setup time. Building a simple generative AI application takes a few hours, but testing it and refining the prompts takes longer. Plan to spend at least as much time on testing as on building. The payoff comes after the tool is stable, not during the first attempt.

The third pitfall is trying to automate a task that changes frequently. If the format of your weekly report changes every month, the AI will need constant retraining. Save those tasks for later and focus on the ones that have stayed the same for at least six months. Stability in the task means your automation will last.

Finally, remember that identifying the right task is itself a skill. The more you practice looking at your work through the lens of pattern versus judgment, the faster you will spot opportunities.

After you automate your first task, the second and third become easier. The investment you make in learning to recognise repetition pays off every time you sit down to build something new.

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