



The EOFY AI Playbook

Practical ways to use AI to get on top of year-end, without the old EOFY scramble.

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Welcome

EOFY is messy at the best of times. Receipts in your inbox. Subscriptions you can't quite remember signing up for. A bookkeeper waiting for that spreadsheet you promised. And a calendar that says June with three weeks of work to do.

Here's the change in 2026: the bits that used to take hours, you can now do in minutes. AI tools like Gemini, Claude, ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot have quietly become genuinely useful for small business admin – finding receipts, organising files, building expense spreadsheets, drafting emails to your accountant.

This playbook walks you through five concrete EOFY moves you can do this week with AI. No coding. No subscriptions you don't already have. Just better use of the tools sitting on your desk.

How to use this guide.

Read it once, end to end, so you know what's possible.

- Pick one of the five moves to try this week. Don't try all five at once.
- Use the prompt library on page 12 – copy, paste, tweak.
- Read the safety guardrails on page 11 before you start. Privacy matters.

A quick but important note

AI is your assistant, not your accountant. It can dramatically speed up admin, but it can also confidently get things wrong. Always check its work. This playbook is general guidance only. Tax rules and AI tools both change quickly. Always confirm tax decisions with a registered tax agent or qualified accountant. The information in this playbook is general in nature and should not be considered financial or professional advice.

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AI x your EOFY in five minutes

Before we dive in, there are three things to think about. If you get these right, the rest of the playbook is straightforward.

AI is an assistant, not an accountant

Today's AI tools are excellent at routine admin: searching, summarising, extracting structured data from messy text, drafting documents and answering plain-English questions. They're not regulated tax advisors. Use AI to do the work faster, then have a human (you, your bookkeeper, your accountant) verify the work that matters.

Three principles that keep you out of trouble

- Never paste sensitive data into a public AI tool. No tax file numbers, no full bank account details, no client passwords. Use paid business plans (more on page 11).
- Always verify the output. AI can confidently invent numbers, dates and rules. If you'd want to be sure of a number before you sent it to the ATO, check it.
- Small, specific tasks beat big vague ones. "Find every receipt from May 2025 to today and list them in a table" is a great prompt. "Help me with my taxes" is not.

The five EOFY moves AI is genuinely good at

1. Sweeping your inbox for receipts and invoices.
2. Organising files into a central, sensible folder.
3. Compiling expense data into a spreadsheet your bookkeeper will love.
4. Spotting patterns, duplicates and missed deductions.
5. Preparing smarter questions for your accountant.

If you only have an hour

Pick Move 1 (sweep your inbox). It's the highest-impact, lowest-risk task on the list - and it sets up everything else in this guide.

Set up your AI workspace

You don't need every AI tool. You need one or two that fit how you already work. The right answer usually depends on which email and document tools you already use.

Pick a primary tool based on where your work lives*

Tool	Best for at EOFY	Notes
Gemini	Sweeping Gmail and Google Drive, working in Sheets and Docs.	Best if your business runs on Google Workspace.
Microsoft Copilot	Searching Outlook and OneDrive, building spreadsheets in Excel, drafting in Word.	Best if you live in Microsoft 365.
Claude	Reading uploaded receipts, drafting clear documents, longer reasoning tasks.	Strong on document understanding and writing.
ChatGPT	Quick prompts, image-to-text receipts, custom GPTs for repeated tasks.	Versatile generalist with vision and file uploads.

*If you're an employee, check your company policies for AI usage.

Use the paid plan if you can

Free or personal AI tools often use your inputs to train the model. Paid plans (Gemini Business, ChatGPT Team, Claude for Work, Microsoft 365 Copilot) typically offer better data handling and don't train on your data by default. If you're a sole trader, even the lowest paid tier is usually worth it for EOFY alone.

A simple folder structure to set up first

AI works best when your files are organised. Spend 10 minutes creating a clean structure once and the rest of the year gets easier.

- FY26 (or whatever financial year you're closing)
- 01 Income – invoices you've issued, payment confirmations
- 02 Expenses – receipts, supplier invoices
- 03 Payroll – pay runs, super, STP records
- 04 Bank – exported bank and credit card statements
- 05 Tax & BAS – lodgements, ATO correspondence
- 06 Reports – year end P&L, balance sheet, stocktake

Sweep your inbox for receipts

If you're a typical small business owner, somewhere between 60% and 90% of your business expenses arrive as a receipt or invoice in your email. Most of them get buried under newsletters and replies. AI can find them in minutes.

How to do it

- Decide on the date range you're sweeping (e.g. 1 July 2025 to today).
- Open the AI assistant in your email tool: Gemini in Gmail, Copilot in Outlook, or use Claude/ChatGPT with a forwarded batch of emails.
- Run the prompt below. Adjust the date range and tone to suit you.
- Get back a structured list - date, sender, amount, what it was for, whether it looks deductible.
- Spot-check 5 random items against the original emails to make sure the AI got it right.

Prompt— Inbox receipt sweep

"Search my email between 1 July 2025 and today for any messages that contain a receipt, invoice, purchase confirmation or payment notification. Build me a table with columns: Date, Sender, Amount (AUD), What it was for (1 short phrase), Likely category (subscriptions, equipment, travel, professional fees, etc.), Likely business expense (yes/no/unclear). Skip personal purchases. Flag anything that looks unusual or where you're not confident."

What to do with the output

Copy the table into a Google Sheet or Excel file (or ask the AI to create one for you). Open each "unclear" or "unusual" entry and confirm the call yourself. Download or save the receipt attachments into your central FY26 / O2 Expenses folder (Move 2).

A small thing that compounds

Once you've done this once, set up a recurring monthly version of the prompt. Future EOFY—you will be very pleased with present-EOFY-you.

Move 2

Build your central receipts folder

A central folder is your single source of truth at EOFY. Your accountant gets one link, you get one place to look, and AI gets a clean dataset to work with for the rest of this playbook.

Step by step

- Create the folder structure on page 5 inside Google Drive or OneDrive (whichever you use).
- Drop every receipt, invoice and statement you've gathered into the right sub-folder.
- Use a consistent file name: YYYY-MM-DD_Supplier_Amount.pdf (e.g. 2026- 03-14_AdobeCreativeCloud_89.99.pdf).
- Use AI to rename a batch — see prompt below.
- Photograph any paper receipts with your phone and save them in the same folder.

Prompt— Batch rename receipts

"I've uploaded a batch of receipt PDFs and images. For each file, read the date, supplier name and total amount, then suggest a new file name in the format: DDMMYY_Supplier_Amount.pdf (replace spaces in supplier names with no space, keep it short). Return a two-column table: original file name, suggested new name. If you can't read a file, say so."

Tips that save real time

- Set up email filters that automatically forward purchase confirmations to a dedicated inbox or label. Easier to find next time.
- Many cloud storage tools now offer automatic OCR and search-inside-PDFs. Turn it on if you can (check your settings or account help section for details).
- If you use receipt-capture software (Hubdoc, Dext, Xero's tool), keep using it. AI complements these tools, it doesn't replace them.

Move 3

Auto-compile your expense spreadsheet

Your bookkeeper or accountant lives in spreadsheets. Hand them one that's already cleaned, categorised and ready to import, and you should save time on both sides.

How to do it

- Open the central receipts folder you built in Move 2.
- If you use Microsoft 365: open Excel, use Copilot to create a sheet from the folder.
- If you use Google Workspace: open Sheets, use Gemini to compile a table from your Drive folder.
- If you use Claude or ChatGPT: drag and drop a batch of receipts into the chat and ask for a structured table back. Paste it into a sheet.
- Always check the totals against your bank statements before you call it done.

Prompt— The Expense Spreadsheet

"I'm uploading a folder of receipts and invoices for FY26. Build me a table with these columns: Date, Supplier, Description (1 short phrase), Amount (AUD ex GST), GST, Total (AUD), Category (Software, Travel, Equipment, Professional fees, Marketing, Utilities, Training, Other), Payment method, Source file name. Sort by Date. At the bottom, give me totals per Category. Flag any duplicates or anything that looks unusual."

After you have the spreadsheet

- Reconcile the total against your business bank account and credit card statements for the same period.
- Note any expenses that appear in your bank statements but not in your spreadsheet – those are missing receipts you need to chase or capture.
- Send the cleaned sheet to your bookkeeper or accountant in advance of your meeting.

Important

AI will sometimes misread a number, especially on a low-quality photo or a receipt with unusual formatting. Spot check at least 10% of rows against the source receipt, and always verify the totals.

Spot patterns and missed deductions

Once your data is in a single sheet, AI can do something humans are slow at: spot patterns across hundreds of rows in seconds.

What to ask AI to look for

- Recurring subscriptions you may not be using any more.
- Duplicate charges (same supplier, same amount, days apart).
- Categories that look unusually high or low compared to last year.
- One-off expenses that may need to be treated as assets, not consumables.
- Categories of legitimate business spend you might have missed entirely.

Prompt— Review my expenses

“Here is my FY26 expense spreadsheet. Please: (1) flag any subscriptions that appear monthly — list each one and the annual total; (2) identify any duplicate or nearduplicate transactions; (3) tell me which categories look unusually high or low; (4) suggest 5 categories of legitimate small business spend I should check I've captured (e.g. home office, training, professional memberships); (5) suggest 3 questions worth asking my accountant. I run [BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR BUSINESS].”

How to use what comes back

- Subscription audit: cancel anything you don't use. Record the saving.
- Duplicates: contact the supplier for refunds where appropriate.
- Missed categories: check whether you have receipts for them and add them in.
- Questions: write them into your accountant prep doc (Move 5).

Disclaimer

AI can suggest deduction categories, but it can't tell you whether a specific expense is deductible for your specific business in your specific structure. That's a tax agent's job. Treat AI's deduction suggestions as a checklist to discuss, not a list to claim.

Prep your accountant meeting

A good accountant is one of the most important relationships a small business owner has. AI helps you walk into the meeting with cleaner data, sharper questions and fewer "can you have a look at this" moments that eat their billable hours and your wallet.

Build your accountant pack with AI

- Upload your year-end P&L and balance sheet (export from Xero, MYOB or QuickBooks).
- Upload your FY26 expense spreadsheet from Move 3.
- Upload last year's tax return summary (your accountant can send this if you don't have a copy).
- Run the prompt below

Prompt— Accountant meeting prep

"I'm meeting my accountant for my EOFY review. Based on these documents, please prepare: (1) a one-paragraph summary of how my business performed this year; (2) 5 specific questions worth asking, prioritised; (3) a list of records and documents I should bring to the meeting; (4) any obvious things that look different from last year and worth explaining. Use plain English. I'm not a finance person."

Use AI to draft the boring stuff too

- Email to chase outstanding customer invoices (firm but polite).
- Email to suppliers asking for missing receipts.
- A short note to staff explaining EOFY processes and STP timing.
- A polite reply to your accountant asking about something you don't fully understand. AI explanations of accounting concepts are usually decent – just verify before you act

What AI is bad at, in case it isn't obvious

Tax advice that depends on your specific facts and structure. Estimates of liability under your specific circumstances. Anything that requires it to know what's actually true about your business beyond what's on the page.

When in doubt, ask the AI to draft questions instead of answers. "What questions should I ask?" is almost always a better prompt than "What's the answer?"

AI safety guardrails (what not to do)

Like all powerful tools they AI needs a small amount of respect. These five rules will keep you and your business safe.

Never put private, sensitive or confidential data into a public AI tool

- Tax File Numbers (yours or anyone else's).
- Full bank account numbers, BSBs paired with account numbers, or credit card details.
- Login passwords for any service.
- Customer or employee personal information beyond what's strictly needed.
- Anything legally privileged or commercially sensitive that you wouldn't email to a competitor.

Use the paid plan, not the free version

Free and personal AI tools often use your conversations to train future models. Paid plans (Gemini Business, ChatGPT Team, Claude for Work, Microsoft 365 Copilot) generally do not, and offer better data handling, audit logs and admin controls.

Check where your data goes

Some AI tools process data overseas. If you handle health records, legal documents, or anything covered by sector-specific privacy obligations, check the tool's data residency before using it. Your industry body or professional association can usually point you to current guidance.

Always verify before you act

AI tools "hallucinate" — they confidently produce information that's wrong. Never act on an AI-generated number, date or fact without checking it against the original source. Treat AI like a brilliant intern who just started yesterday.

Be transparent when AI is in the loop

If you're using AI to draft client-facing communications or process customer data, be open about it. Australian customers are increasingly comfortable with AI when its use is proportionate and disclosed.

Two-line risk test

Would I be comfortable if this information showed up on the front page of a newspaper, or in a competitor's hands? If either answer is no, don't paste it into AI.

The Prompt Library

Move 1

Prompt— Inbox receipt sweep

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Prompt— Accountant meeting prep

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Move 6

Bonus Prompt— Polite invoice nudge

"Draft a short, friendly email reminding [CLIENT NAME] that invoice #[NUMBER] for \$[AMOUNT], originally due [DATE], is now [DAYS] days overdue. Tone: warm, professional, no guilt-tripping. Two paragraphs maximum. End with a clear next step."

Your one-page AI EOFY checklist

Print this. Tick it off. Pin it next to your desk.

Set up

- Primary AI tool chosen (one of: Gemini, Copilot, Claude, ChatGPT).
- Paid business plan enabled (or risk accepted with a clear understanding).
- Folder structure created in Drive or OneDrive.
- Safety guardrails reviewed (page 11).

Move 1: Inbox sweep

- Date range decided.
- Inbox sweep prompt run on the right account.
- Output table reviewed and 5 random items spot-checked.

Move 2: Central folder

- All identified receipts saved into the right sub-folder.
- File names normalised.
- Paper receipts photographed and added.

Move 3: Spreadsheet

- Expense spreadsheet generated and downloaded.
- 10% of rows spot-checked against source receipts.
- Totals reconciled against bank statements.

Move 4: Patterns

- Subscription audit completed and unused subscriptions cancelled.
- Duplicates and anomalies investigated.
- Missed deduction categories noted.

Move 5: Accountant prep

- Accountant pack prepared with AI.
- 5 prioritised questions written down.
- Meeting booked with all documents shared in advance.

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Melbourne Innovation Centre helps businesses and the entrepreneurs behind them build a smarter, stronger future. From workshops and events to online learning, coaching and mentoring, we deliver tailored programs and practical support that empowers people to start, grow, adapt and thrive. We combine real-world expertise with a community-driven approach that meets people where they are, connects them with knowledge and networks, and supports them to turn great ideas into greater impact.



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