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Follow What Matters with AI

Create your own small interactive panel: follow meaningful changes, join the debate and revisit what you think.

Human-led. AI-enabled.

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Perhaps you follow a football team, a band, a favourite performer, a local transport proposal or a particular technology. There's usually more information about it than you could ever need. Some is valuable; some is repeated, speculative or designed to attract attention. This guide will help you do something more interesting than receive summaries: create a conversation you can interrupt, challenge and contribute to, while keeping a record of what actually changes.

You don't need a professional research system, a dashboard or a subscription to anything. A document or spreadsheet and an AI conversation are enough to begin. If your AI assistant cannot browse current sources, give it links or text yourself, and never ask it to pretend that it checked something it did not.

We'll use following a football team's progress over four weeks as the running example. It's deliberately illustrative, not a report about any real club or results. Short parallels show how this can work for music, performers and local issues. You'll practise putting your own opinion into the discussion, asking AI to argue a serious alternative, and testing both against later evidence. By the end you'll have three things you can keep and use: a Signal Log, a Weekly Sense-Making Note and a Working View & Change Record.

Think of the AI as your own small, interactive news panel — not a panel of independent experts, and certainly not an oracle. You can ask it to lay out different explanations, stop it when something sounds doubtful, offer your own view and ask for a challenge. The value comes from that exchange, together with checks against actual sources. You remain the editor: deciding what matters, which arguments deserve attention and when a view should change.

COPY / ADAPT — OPEN THE CONVERSATION

I want to follow [subject] because [reason]. My current question is [question]. First separate what is confirmed, what is claimed and what is unknown. Offer two plausible interpretations and explain what evidence supports each. Then ask what I think before you form any conclusion. Challenge my view with the strongest fair counterargument, one question at a time. Help me write a working theory, what we would expect to see next, and what would make us revise or drop it. Do not invent sources or claim to have checked current information unless you actually have.

1. Choose a subject, then choose a question

'Tell me everything about my team' sounds helpful but invites an avalanche. Try something narrower: 'Has our team's defensive performance improved over the past month, and what might explain any change?' The point is not to prove a favourite theory. It's to discover what you would actually like to understand.

For a band, the question might be whether a tour is genuinely planned and which dates have been announced. For a performer, you could follow confirmed film or stage work rather than personal gossip. For a local bus route, you might track whether an announced service improvement is approved, funded and operating. A useful question has a clear subject and a reason for checking again later.

Keep the monitoring proportionate. For the team, check after each match and write one short weekly note. For an occasional tour, check only when there's a meaningful reason. Too much monitoring can make a hobby feel like unpaid administrative work.

COPY / ADAPT — CHOOSE THE QUESTION

I want to follow [subject] because [why it matters]. My main question is [question]. Help me choose 3–5 developments that would be meaningful, the most trustworthy places to check them and a sensible review rhythm. Also tell me what would be merely interesting noise. Ask me one question at a time before we settle the plan.

2. Write down the starting position

Before new information arrives, save a brief snapshot of what you think you know. For the team, this could be: 'Recent results have been poor; I'm concerned about defending set pieces; I haven't checked whether the

underlying chances conceded have actually changed.' Keep a date beside it. A starting view should be honest enough to include doubt.

For a council project, your baseline may be 'proposal announced; no approved budget confirmed'. For a band, it may be 'rumours of live shows; no official dates'. Without that starting point, it's surprisingly hard to say what changed later rather than what you merely noticed.

STARTING-POSITION CARD

My question: [one sentence] | Date: [date] | What I currently know: [2–3 facts] | What I suspect: [a working interpretation] | What remains unknown: [1–3 gaps] | What would change my mind: [an observable sign].

3. Collect signals, not every mention

Use a simple Signal Log. Each entry should say what happened, when, where the information came from and how sure you are. An official club injury update is different from an unattributed rumour. One announcement reported by five outlets is still one announcement. A result is an observation; an explanation of why it happened is an interpretation.

Date / signal	Evidence and source	Assessment / next check
Week 1: team loses	Verified result; official match report	Fact. Does not by itself show a continuing defensive problem.
Week 1: injury rumour	Unconfirmed social-media claim	Do not treat as fact; seek a reliable team update.
Week 2: set-piece goals conceded	Match observation, check official statistics	Potential pattern; check opponent and sample size.

A music example works exactly the same way: record a tour date once, link to the band's official announcement, and put unverified fan speculation in a separate category. For a local development, distinguish a consultation, a planning decision, allocated funding and completed work. They are stages, not interchangeable headlines.

COPY / ADAPT — FILTER THE LOG

Review these notes about [subject]. Separate confirmed developments, attributed claims, repeated coverage and my own interpretations. Combine reports that describe the same underlying event. Tell me which two or three items would change our starting view, and what needs verification from an original source. If nothing material has changed, say so.

4. Once a week, ask what changed and why

A weekly note is where a collection of items becomes something you can understand. Don't just rewrite the Signal Log. Compare it with your earlier question. Did anything material change? What supports the pattern? What might explain it differently? What has not yet been checked?

For our fictional team, a short note might read: 'Two recent matches featured more set-piece chances conceded, but the opposition was unusually strong and our injury information is incomplete. It's too early to call this a persistent weakness.' The point is that the note makes uncertainty visible rather than inflating a pattern because it sounds convincing.

Now make the conversation genuinely two-way. You might tell the AI, 'I think it's the manager's defensive tactics.' Ask it to test that explanation against injuries, opposition strength and what the match evidence actually shows. A music fan could propose that several festival bookings mean a full tour is coming; AI should challenge that idea against official announcements. A local resident could ask whether an announced budget really means a bus service will run. The aim is not for the machine to win the argument; it is for you to see what would settle it.

A fan following a band might conclude: 'An official announcement confirms three dates, but no further tour is confirmed.' A resident following a bus-route proposal might write: 'The public consultation has closed, but the service change has not been approved.' In both cases the useful output may be a careful 'not yet'.

WEEKLY SENSE-MAKING NOTE — COPY / FILL IN

Subject and week: [ ] | **What changed:** [up to 3 confirmed developments] | **Why it may matter:** [ ] | **What could explain it differently:** [ ] | **What we still do not know:** [ ] | **What deserves attention next:** [ ] | **What has not materially changed:** [ ].

5. Keep a working view that can be proved wrong

If you think a pattern is forming, put your own explanation into words, not just the AI's. For the team: 'I think set-piece defending may be a recurring weakness.' Ask your panel for the strongest contrary case. Then decide what observations would support your view, what would weaken it, and when you'll look again. A view is a working theory to test, not a finding to defend. AI can help surface alternatives, but it cannot turn a small sample or uncertain source into proof.

Working view	Expected signs	What would weaken it
Our team has a persistent set-piece issue	Similar problems across several matches, against different opponents	Improvement across several matches, or evidence that the early observations were unusual.
A music tour is likely	Official announcements or credible confirmed bookings	Explicit cancellation, or months without any corroboration.

Don't write a forecast to congratulate yourself later. Write a fair test you would be willing to lose. Some questions will stay unresolved. That's a legitimate result.

COPY / ADAPT — CHALLENGE THE VIEW

Here is my current working view: [view]. Give me the strongest alternative explanation, two observable signals that would support my view and two that would weaken it. Separate what is already evidenced from what we would need to watch. Do not turn a possibility into a prediction.

6. Return after time has passed

After four weeks, read your first note before asking for the latest AI summary. Reopen your earlier debate: what did you argue, what did the AI challenge, and what has the evidence done to those competing explanations? Your view may have strengthened, weakened, become more precise or simply remained open. Record the reason rather than awarding either side a point for sounding convincing.

You may also notice relationships you missed: team performance and injuries; a band's public activity and confirmed bookings; local transport proposals and funding decisions. Put the strands beside one another only when it helps answer your question. That's the useful small-scale version of what Grey Matters came to call an **aggregation**: stepping back to see a wider pattern, not adding every possible topic to the project.

FOUR-WEEK REVIEW CARD

Starting view: What did I think at the beginning? | **Observed change:** What is genuinely different and supported? | **Alternative:** What else could explain it? | **Current position:** Strengthened, weakened, narrower or unresolved — and why? | **Next trigger:** What would justify reviewing it again?

7. Decide whether anything needs doing — including nothing

Most monitoring doesn't need to trigger an action. Sometimes you simply understand your team a little better. Sometimes an official tour announcement means it's time to decide whether to buy a ticket. Sometimes a council meeting creates a sensible opportunity to submit a question or attend a consultation. The human makes that decision, using checked facts and personal priorities.

The same principle becomes more important in serious subjects such as finance, employment or health. An AI-generated interpretation should not become personal advice. For those matters, check primary information and seek qualified help where needed. Don't put confidential financial or health details into a tool without understanding how your information will be handled.

Finally, protect your enjoyment. If you spend longer maintaining the log than watching the matches, listening to the music or following the local issue you cared about, reduce the process. This is meant to make attention more rewarding, not consume all of it.

Your four-week experiment

1. **Week 1:** Pick one question, save a dated starting view and log only meaningful new items.
2. Week 2: Hold a short interactive 'panel' discussion. Tell AI your own view, ask for a serious counterargument and save a weekly note with what could settle the debate.
3. **Week 3:** Keep the signal log light; record a genuine contradiction rather than smoothing it away.
4. Week 4: Reopen the Week 2 discussion. Compare both working explanations with what actually happened, record what matured or fell away, and decide what matters next.

WHAT YOU TAKE AWAY

Signal Log: a small record of developments and their sources. **Weekly Sense-Making Note:** a plain-English account of what changed and why. **Working View & Change Record:** an honest explanation of what you currently think, what might prove you wrong and when to revisit it. All three can live in one simple document.

You can start in twenty minutes and keep the whole exercise small. A document with three headings and one recurring conversation is enough. If you eventually need a scheduled feed, spreadsheet or richer dashboard, add it only when experience justifies the work. The aim isn't to know everything or to have AI deliver the final opinion. It is to take part in a better-informed discussion, develop your own ideas and notice when reality gives you a reason to change them.

Companion reading: *From Headlines to Understanding* tells how the Grey Matters monitoring process evolved from a few daily questions into deeper analysis, rotation and aggregation. It's an optional backstory; this guide works independently.

Scope note: These prompts and examples are suggested exercises informed by one ongoing Grey Matters collaboration, not a tested universal method. The football, tour and local-project examples here are illustrative; they are not reports of actual events.