**Using “Track Changes” to Detect AI Use in Writing**

Track Changes itself won’t directly tell you “this is AI-written,” but you can use it as part of your workflow to *spot patterns* that may suggest AI involvement. Here are a few ways:

**1. Require Draft Submissions in Word with Track Changes**

* Ask students to submit at least one early draft and then a revised draft using **Track Changes** turned on.
* This lets you see *how* their writing evolves. Genuine student writing usually shows:
  + Incremental revisions (fixing grammar, rephrasing, reorganizing paragraphs).
  + A mix of surface-level edits (typos, small word swaps) and deeper structural changes.
* AI-assisted work often shows:
  + Minimal or oddly “global” revisions (entire paragraphs rewritten at once).
  + Polished, error-free drafts that lack the messy, iterative editing process.

**2. Watch for “Clean” or Sudden Draft Shifts**

* A first draft that looks nearly publication-ready can be suspicious.
* If you notice that the only tracked changes are superficial (like formatting or spacing), that might suggest the text wasn’t *actually written* by the student.
* Genuine student drafts usually carry spelling, grammar, and stylistic quirks that are smoothed out over time.

**3. Use Compare Documents**

* If a student resubmits without Track Changes, you can use **Review → Compare** in Word to see what changed between two versions.
* Sudden, wholesale replacement of paragraphs with new, highly polished text can be a red flag for AI use.

**4. Look for Editing “Fingerprints”**

* Human edits often involve:
  + Trial and error (writing a phrase, deleting half, trying again).
  + Misspelled corrections.
  + Word choice experiments.
* AI-inserted edits usually appear as:
  + Entire sentences/paragraphs replaced in one move.
  + Flawless grammar, but possibly generic tone.

**5. Pair with Other Methods**

Track Changes should be one tool among others:

* Oral follow-ups: Ask students to explain or expand on parts of their essay.
* Writing samples: Compare essays with in-class writing.
* Consistency: Look for mismatches in style, vocabulary level, or voice across assignments.

✅ **Bottom line:** Track Changes can help you detect *unnatural revision patterns*. It won’t prove AI use on its own, but it gives you visibility into whether a student actually *went through the writing process*.