

Battlecards

Eight cards. Read the relevant one before a meeting where you know the incumbent. Every price here is published by the named vendor and was checked on 4 September 2026. Re-check before quoting one out loud.

Rule. Never say a competitor is bad. Say what they are for. The buyer has usually chosen them for a sensible reason and telling them otherwise ends the meeting.

1. ChatGPT or Claude, used directly

What it is for	Getting a draft in ninety seconds. It is genuinely good at that and the buyer is right to use it.
Where it stops	No approved brief, no live research grounding by default, no published quality scores, no professional editor, nothing saved to a system anyone else can see, and no publishing.
Say	"Keep using it, and connect it to us: Austen works as a connector in Claude and other assistants that take MCP servers, so the same request produces a researched, scored article saved in Austen, ready for a professional edit, rather than a draft in a chat window."
Do not say	Anything implying the model is worse. It is the same class of model. The difference is the process and the person at the end of it.

2. Byword

Published price	\$99 for 25 articles, \$299 for 80, \$999 for 300. That is \$3.33 to \$3.96 an article.
What it is for	Volume publishing where nobody will read the output before it goes live. Very good value for that.
Where it stops	Nobody edits it. No brief approval loop with a person. No editorial firm behind it.
Say	"If you can publish an unedited draft, buy theirs. It is cheaper than anything we will ever sell you. The question is whether your brand can publish unread."

3. Frase

Published price	\$103 a month for 40 articles, \$239 for 100 on annual billing. \$2.39 to \$2.58 an article, the cheapest credible product in the category.
What it is for	SEO briefs and drafts at high volume for teams that already have writers and editors.
Say	"They are the price floor of the category and they are good at what they do. We are not competing with them on price and I would not pretend to."

4. Verblío

Published price	\$0.06 a word for the AI plus human hybrid, plus a \$49.50 monthly platform fee. About \$90 for a 1,500-word article. \$0.16 a word for fully human.
Why it matters most	This is the closest thing to Austen on paper, it is honestly priced, and it proves the hybrid price point clears. Treat it as the floor, not the enemy.
Where it differs	Their edit is a freelance writer's work. Ours is a professional editorial firm working against your style guide and returning tracked changes on the original file. And our brief is approved before anything is written.
Say	"Good product, fairly priced, and the closest comparison you will find. The difference is who edits it and whether you see the edit."
Never say	That we are cheaper. We are not, and the buyer can check in thirty seconds.

5. Jasper and Writer

Published price	Jasper Pro \$69 per seat per month, \$59 annual. Jasper Business is unpublished; one buying platform reports an average contract value of \$25,000 a year across 48 deals. Writer's reported median contract value on the same platform is \$28,910.
What it is for	A marketing organisation buying a brand platform for many seats, with procurement, security review and a rollout.
Say	"Different purchase entirely. They sell a platform to an organisation. We sell finished articles to a team that needs them next month. If you are running a platform selection, we are not in it."

6. A freelance writer

Typical price	The Editorial Freelancers Association's 2026 rate chart puts ghostwriting at 15 to 30 cents a word and work for hire at 25 to 45 cents, so \$225 to \$675 for 1,500 words. UK freelance blog posts run GBP 150 to 400, or GBP 400 to 900 for a pillar piece.
Where they win	One flagship piece with a distinctive voice and real reporting. Say so plainly; the buyer knows it and denying it costs you credibility.
Where we win	Ten pieces in thirty days, briefed once, chased never, at a fixed price, with a consistent voice across all ten.
Say	"For your one big piece this quarter, hire a great freelancer. For the ten that have to happen every month, that model is where your time goes."

7. An agency retainer

Typical price	A survey of 439 providers puts the average agency content retainer at \$3,209 a month and the average per-project fee at \$9,508.
Where they win	Strategy, distribution, design and paid media alongside the writing. Ours is production only, and saying so is a strength.
Say	"If you need strategy and distribution, keep the agency. If what you need is more finished articles per month, our retainer is \$2,000 to \$2,500 for eight, and the definition of what you get is written down."

8. Doing nothing

What it looks like	"We keep meaning to." A blog whose last post is four months old. An open content req nobody has filled.
The most common competitor on this list.	Do not fight it with urgency, which they will not believe. Fight it with a small, dated, specific thing.
Say	"Here are three subjects your competitors own and you have nothing on. That report is yours either way. If you want the articles, ten of them exist thirty days after you say go."

Things we must never say

- That any named company uses Austen. None has agreed in writing to be named.
- That Proofed's editing clients are Austen customers. They are not, and the difference is the whole relationship.
- Any usage number, growth figure or conversion rate. None is measured in a form you can quote.
- That articles score 90 or above for search or AI answer engines. Most do not, and the product no longer claims it.
- "100% original" or "plagiarism free". Neither is measured. Say "generated, not copied, and rewritten free of charge if you find a genuine match."
- That Google penalises competitors' AI content. It does not work that way and the buyer may know the policy better than you do.
- A competitor's price without its check date.