

How AI Timekeeping Works

The capture, draft, review and release pipeline, the data sources behind it, the guardrails it needs, and how ABA Formal Opinion 512 applies

MIRA · miranow.ai · Updated October 2026

1 The AI timekeeping pipeline

1 Capture

Connected systems record activity signals: email, meetings, documents, files, browser research.

2 Organize

Signals are grouped into work sessions and matched to a likely client and matter.

3 Draft

AI proposes a duration, a narrative and, where used, a task and activity code.

4 Lawyer review

The lawyer edits, merges, splits or excludes each draft and confirms the matter.

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review.

2 Data sources and what each signal can show

Source	Signal	Useful for	Watch for
Email	Sent and received messages, recipients, thread	Correspondence entries; matter from client contacts	Reading time is hard to measure
Calendar	Meeting time, attendees, subject	Meetings and scheduled calls	Meetings that ran short or long
Teams and video calls	Join and leave times, participants	Actual call length	Internal calls that are not billable
Document management	Open, edit, save in a matter workspace	Drafting and review entries	Documents left open in the background
Cloud files	File edits in OneDrive or SharePoint	Work outside the DMS	Files with no matter tag
Browser	Research sites visited, with permission	Legal research entries	Personal browsing must be excluded
Phone system	Call logs with numbers and length	Client and counsel calls	Calls on personal phones leave no record

3 Guardrails a sound AI timekeeping system needs

CONTROL

Draft by default

Everything the AI produces stays a draft until a person approves it.

ACCURACY

Matter confirmation

The lawyer confirms the client and matter on each entry before release.

FEES

Real durations

Durations come from activity evidence and are adjustable by the lawyer.

PRIVACY
Personal exclusions
Personal sites, private calendar items and non-work apps are filtered out.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Minimal detail
Narratives describe the work without exposing privileged strategy.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Data use limits
Client data is not used to train shared models without consent.

SECURITY
Role-based access
Raw activity is visible only to the timekeeper and approved reviewers.

GOVERNANCE
Audit trail
Every edit and release is logged with who made it and when.

4 ABA Formal Opinion 512 (July 2024) applied to AI timekeeping

Duty	Model Rule	What it means for AI timekeeping
Competence	1.1	Understand what the tool captures, how it drafts, and where it errs
Confidentiality	1.6	Assess how client information is stored, shared and used by the vendor
Communication	1.4	Tell clients about AI use if they ask or if it affects work or fees
Reasonable fees	1.5	Bill actual time spent; AI efficiency is not billable time
Supervision	5.1, 5.3	Set firm policy, train users, oversee vendors and staff using the tool

Opinion 512 addresses generative AI tools in general. The right-hand column applies its duties to timekeeping. Check your state bar's own guidance as well.

5 Questions to ask any AI timekeeping vendor

- ☐ Which systems do you capture from, and which need a desktop agent?

☐ Do you use screen capture, screenshots or keystroke logging?

☐ Can users exclude personal sites, apps and calendar items?

☐ Who can see a lawyer's raw activity data?

☐ How do you match activity to a client and matter?

☐ How is a draft duration calculated?

☐ Can anything be released to billing without approval?
- ☐ Which AI model provider processes our data, and where?

☐ Is our data used to train any model, yours or a third party's?

☐ How long is raw activity kept, and can we set retention?

☐ Where is data stored, and can we choose the region?

☐ Do you have a current SOC 2 Type II report or ISO/IEC 27001 certificate?

☐ Do you support SSO and matter-level access restrictions?

☐ Can we export all entries and audit history if we leave?

6 Using AI drafts responsibly

Do

- ✓ Review every draft before release
- ✓ Correct durations to match the work actually done
- ✓ Remove privileged detail from narratives
- ✓ Write a firm policy on AI use in timekeeping

Avoid

- ✗ Bill the time a task would have taken without AI
- ✗ Release batches of drafts without reading them
- ✗ Let the tool pick the matter on shared documents
- ✗ Assume vendor defaults meet your confidentiality duties

7 Terms used in AI timekeeping

Activity signal

A recorded event such as a sent email, a meeting or a document edit.

Draft entry

A proposed time entry that has not been approved.

Matter mapping

Linking an activity to the right client and matter number.

Passive capture

Recording activity without the lawyer starting a timer.

Release

Sending an approved entry to the billing or finance system.

Narrative

The written description of the work on a time entry.

8 How MIRA handles this

MIRA prepares draft entries from email, calendar, documents and connected work systems, and lawyers review them in Microsoft Teams. MIRA does not use screen capture, screenshots or keystroke logging. Lawyers can edit, save, exclude or release entries; the AI does not bill activity on its own.

Sources and references: ABA Formal Opinion 512, Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools (July 29, 2024); ABA Model Rules 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 5.1 and 5.3; ABA Formal Opinion 93-379 (billing only for time actually spent).
General information, not legal advice. Check your jurisdiction's rules and your client billing guidelines.

MIRA

www.miranow.ai/solutions/ai-timekeeping-for-lawyers