

How to Use (and not use) AI Tools in This Class

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When using AI tools to assist your writing, you're going to run into opportunities as well as risks. This document is meant to help you navigate both, should you choose to experiment with AI tools. **Keep in mind that acceptable and unacceptable use will vary from class to class and instructor to instructor, so do not assume that what's a fine application of AI in this class reflects what another teacher will allow in their class.** Instructors design their activities and assignments with specific learning objectives in mind, and some uses of AI simply do not support your learning as much as they support quick completion. Be aware that UChicago does not have a blanket policy on AI, so you should always check with each individual professor to see what you may use.

With that in mind, this class rests on the assumption that you've taken coursework that has built up some basic academic writing skills already. The goal of this course **is not** to teach you those skills, but you will need to produce good academic writing in order to express the ideas this course **is** built to help you interact with. As such, you are welcome to use AI tools as an aid in your writing process as long as you follow the policy in the syllabus and the guidelines in this document and make sure to provide appropriate citation.

Things to Remember When Using AI Tools

(These guidelines were adapted from and inspired by the excellent work of Drs. Ethan and Lilach Mollick: Mollick, Ethan R. and Mollick, Lilach, Assigning AI: Seven Approaches for Students, with Prompts (September 23, 2023). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4475995> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4475995>)

- **Do not assume your conversation is private.** Only share with the AI what you are comfortable sharing. Security breaches happen on many web services, and these tools in particular use your inputs as training data.
- Be the “**human in the loop**”:
 - AI tools **hallucinate**, making up quotes, sources, and assertions that are not based in fact. Generative AI tools are designed to respond **fluently first and plausibly second**. Do not take their responses at face value or without considering whether they are the right suggestion for you or whether output is true. This is especially true in areas in which you have less knowledge.
 - **Be responsible for the final product you submit**, even if AI helps in the process. Fact-check all work with trusted resources, like those from [our library](#). If it gives you advice, evaluate it critically before acting on it.

- **Use only tools that allow you to link to your conversation.** For the purposes of this course, I want to see how you used the AI to support your completion of the work.
- Remember, this is an aid to your composition, but **do not accept AI suggestions so readily that you skip over the process of thinking through your ideas.** A fluently stated idea from AI is not worth as much as one that you've thought through yourself first.

How to Use AI Tools Effectively to Assist Your Writing

Large Language Models (LLMs) are good at creating fluent writing and have been trained on many samples of academic writing. Here are some ways you can take advantage of that strength to refine your writing.

Best Practices for Prompting AI Tools

- **Provide context.** The AI will try to help you improve your work, but it doesn't know your purpose; clearly explain your goals and where you are struggling. Any information may help it tailor its guidance, including the audience for your paper, the assignment, and what you are trying to accomplish.
 - Additionally, you can specify things like voice, genre, and structure.
- Ask for explanations. The tool can give you suggestions for your writing, but you can also ask it to explain the suggestions so that you can learn why this output or change might be useful.
- **Ask directly for advice and question its assumptions.** If you aren't sure the AI is right about some or all of its feedback, challenge it and ask it to explain that feedback.
- **Seek clarification.** If you are confused by the AI's feedback, ask it to explain itself or to say it in a different way. You can keep asking until you get what you need.

Sample Prompts

These prompts were borrowed and adapted from Cynthia Alby's [AI Prompts for Teaching](#) as well as Andrea Winkler's AI policy "[Use of AI-CONTENT GENERATORS](#)" (shared via Lance Eaton). The headings below (Beginning, Middle, End) correspond to the different stages of the paper writing process (e.g. proposal, rough draft, and final draft).

Beginning

- "Help me generate a list of potential research questions for my paper on X. Here are my current thoughts on the topic and what I've read thus far": (INSERT)
- "Help me draft an outline on my topic. Here is my tentative thesis statement and a few major points I want to make": (INSERT)

Middle

- “Read my paper draft and make suggestions for clarity of my ideas. Is there anywhere that my reader might have a hard time following my thinking? Is there anywhere I can revise for flow or reorganize to help the reader follow? Provide reasons for your suggestions.” (INSERT)
- “Suggest specific ways that I can revise this piece to make it more (clear, succinct, have a tone more appropriate for [INSERT GENRE - in this case, social science research paper]. Provide reasons for those revisions. Here is what I’ve written so far”: (INSERT) (If the piece is long, you might need to provide it in sections or use a tool that can accept file uploads, like [Claude.AI](#)).
- “Read my paper and give feedback on the strength of my argument. Point out areas where a reader may have questions or objections and provide reasons.” (INSERT)

End

- “Here is the introduction to my paper. Give me ten possible titles for this piece.” (INSERT)
- “Revise this piece making no significant changes other than grammar and punctuation. Here is what I’ve written so far.” (INSERT)

How Far is Too Far? Inappropriate use of AI

- You may not use entire sentences or paragraphs suggested by an AI content generator without providing quotation marks and a citation, just as you would for any other source. There is now guidance available from the [APA](#) and [MLA](#) for citing generative AI.
- You may not have an AI content generator write the whole or substantive part of any draft (either rough or final) of an assignment for you.
- You may not rely on generative AI to do your thinking for you. Like Wikipedia, AI is a tool that you can use to help jump-start or fine tune your work – but you should do the hard work yourself.
- By submitting assignments in this class, you affirm that they are your own work and you attribute the use of any tools and sources, including any and all AI content generators.

(This section was adapted from Andrea Winkler’s syllabus, under the AI policy section “[Use of AI-CONTENT GENERATORS](#)” shared via Lance Eaton. Rights: [Creative Commons 4.0 By & Share Alike](#).)