

ASSIGNING WRITING AND GENERATIVE AI

Faculty Resource Series

Illinois Tech’s mission is “to provide distinctive and relevant education in an environment of scientific, technological, and professional knowledge creation and innovation.” As part of that, we believe it is critical to prepare students to critically and productively engage with new and innovative technologies—like Generative AI—in order to be leaders and innovators in the future. This faculty resource on Assigning Writing and Generative AI is intended to provide guidance and examples for faculty on how and when to use generative AI technologies when giving writing assignments.

In assigning writing and communication tasks, we heavily encourage instructors to view generative AI as a tool that students can use, much like spell check, automated grammar suggestions, and so forth. That is, generative AI tools can be helpful throughout the various phases of writing. However, in discovering these benefits, students also need to develop AI literacy and discover how to approach writing with a critical eye so that they can produce effective writing with the variety of tools and aids available to them. We align with writing professional organizations in our belief that students need help developing “critical AI literacy” as part of their writing practices, or that large language models “have the potential to act as literacy sponsors to emerging academic writers” but could harm students’ reading, thinking, and writing skills if used uncritically.¹

Using generative AI in writing

Consider allowing and even encouraging students to use generative AI at various phases of the writing process, as it aligns with your learning outcomes. Initial research has found that students benefit from and appreciate developing AI literacy on how to use generative AI in writing, especially when it is explicitly taught as part of the assignment.² In particular, integrating generative AI into writing assignments can help students to learn the difference between having AI do work for them, and having AI help them along the way.

There may be places where it is critical that students do not use generative AI tools—for example, if a learning outcome of the class is that students learn to structurally edit

¹ MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force on Writing and AI (2023, July). *MLA-CCCC Joint Task Force on Writing and AI Working Paper: Overview of the Issues, Statement of Principles, and Recommendations*. <https://aiandwriting.hcommons.org/working-paper-1/>.

² Dumin, L. (2023, July 17-18). *AI and Writing Classrooms: A study of Purposeful Use and Student Responses to the Technology* [Conference presentation]; Head, S. (2023, July 17-18). “With great power...” *Student Perspectives of Ethical and Effective Uses of Generative AI* [Conference presentation]. Conference of Writing Program Administrators, Reno, NV, United States.

scientific writing, it may be more advantageous for students to do this without the aid of tools so that they fully learn the process. However, if a learning outcome is to produce a report about a scientific topic for the public, it may be advantageous to allow students to use generative AI to help develop arguments, so that they can critically evaluate many counterarguments in light of their own ideas and understand how these tools may help them (or not). Allowing students to engage with generative AI when appropriate helps students to ultimately develop a deeper understanding of the tools, and recognize the value of their own added human expertise.

Below is a list of ideas for how generative AI tools may be used throughout the writing process. Draw from these ideas freely, as they align with your own class and learning outcomes.

Prewriting and drafting

- Ask generative AI tools to brainstorm ideas with you, where it may push on and expand your existing ideas
- Ask generative AI tools to give you counterarguments to your existing thesis (this can highlight weak spots in an argument that a student may have missed)
- Ask generative AI tools to produce an initial outline for your argument, and critically analyze the degree to which it meets your goals
- Ask generative AI tools for a sample of the type of document you are producing (e.g., “Write a brief technical report on an experiment”), in order to learn the standard rhetorical moves of a genre

Revising

- Paste your own text into generative AI tools and ask for feedback on the draft (note: initial studies have found that students often find this initially helpful and comparable to peer feedback, but that over time it becomes less insightful¹)
- Ask generative AI tools to give you suggestions on how to make your draft more concise
- Ask generative AI tools to identify parts of your draft that are repetitive
- Ask generative AI tools to identify keywords for your text, which may highlight a degree to which a text feels off focus from its intention

Grading writing when students use generative AI

Be sure to clarify the extent to which generative AI is permitted in your class, and for particular assignments. We recommend putting this clarification on the syllabus, on the assignment sheet, and/or repeating it verbally in class. Also ensure that your guidelines are clearly related to the learning outcomes of the class and assignment, and make this connection clear to your students.

If you allow students to use generative AI in a writing assignment, you may ask them to highlight the portions of the text that came from generative AI, or to reflect critically on it after drafting: this tactic can help both you as an instructor and the students to understand how it is being used (students may even find reflection on this data to be insightful). If you

suspect a student has used generative AI inappropriately, refer to [Illinois Tech's Guideline on Academic Honesty and Generative AI](#).

For more information and resources on teaching and research with generative AI at Illinois Tech, please see [Illinois Tech's Guideline on Academic Honesty and Generative AI](#), as well as the following faculty guides: [Teaching and Generative AI](#), and [Sources, Research, and Generative AI](#).