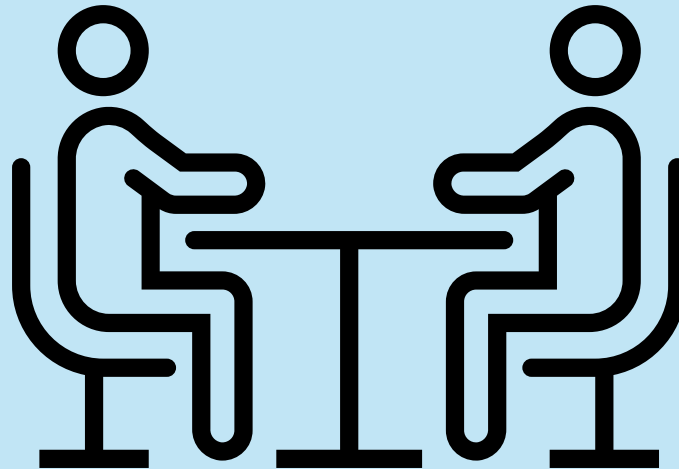
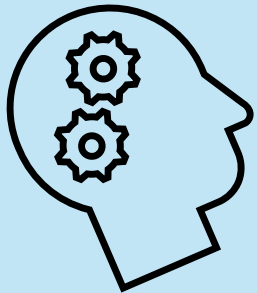


Treating AI as a Writing Tool

Not an Idea Generator



Establishing Some Terms

Our focus today is on Large Language Models (LLMs):

- Language models trained on vast amounts of existing text
- The ‘brains’ behind common chatbots (ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini)
- Used to generate text in response to prompts inputted by users
- Operate predictively to match prompts to statistically relevant language structures in their dataset

Shortcomings and Risks

Some prominent problems with LLMs:

- **Hallucination:**
 - Responses lack checks for accuracy
 - Present incorrect information as fact
- **Bias:**
 - Responses reflect the biases of the text in their dataset
 - Present biased information as objective and neutral
- **Authorship:**
 - Responses draw from existing sources without crediting them
 - Present others' ideas as original creations

Problems Within Academia

LLMs pose challenges for learners:

- Threaten academic integrity
- Undermine learning and critical engagement
- Hamper the development of reading and writing skills

Problems Within Academia

LLMs pose challenges for educators:

- Detecting plagiarism
- Accurately assessing understanding
- Employing consistent standards

What Can We Do About It?

Our response to GenAI should be:

- Consistent in approach but variable in application
- Informed by our pedagogical experiences
- Responsive to our students' goals and challenges
- Suited to the learning outcomes we are assessing

My Goal Today

To mine my experiences working with post-secondary students as a college instructor and writing centre tutor

...in order to develop a broad approach to how we can:

- Embrace positive uses of AI where applicable
- Avoid uses that threaten academic integrity and learning
- Create and communicate AI use policies for our classes
- Empower students to make informed and ethical use of AI

Helping Students Use GenAI Ethically

Two ways to use text-generative AI:

1) To generate *ideas*

- “Complete this assignment”
- “Explain this topic”
- “Give claims to support this thesis”
- “Analyze rhetoric in this text”
- “Critique this argument”

This should be avoided

2) To generate *writing*

- “Turn this outline into an essay”
- “Give synonyms for this word”
- “Paraphrase this passage”
- “Improve flow in this paragraph”
- “Identify grammar issues in this sentence”

This should be cautiously embraced

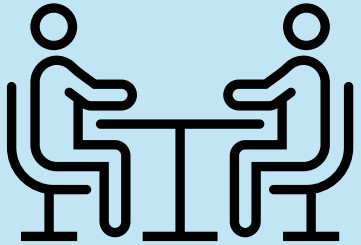
Using AI to Generate Ideas

Some argue that this can be done ethically:

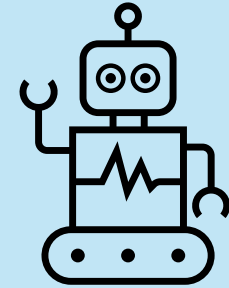
- To support brainstorming
- To support research
- To support critical analysis
- To support reflection and revision

Problem: Fine line between support and crutch

Helping Students Generate Ideas



Tutor



GenAI

Goal:

- To help students succeed
- To maintain academic integrity

- To do whatever it's prompted to

Method:

- Asking questions
- Suggesting options

- Giving answers

Using AI as a Writing Tool

Why is this any better?

- Ideas come from the student, not the machine
- No need for citation: We give credit for ideas, not how they are presented
- Professors are (often) interested in assessing knowledge, not writing skills
- AI is actually good at this: It is a writing machine, not an idea machine