

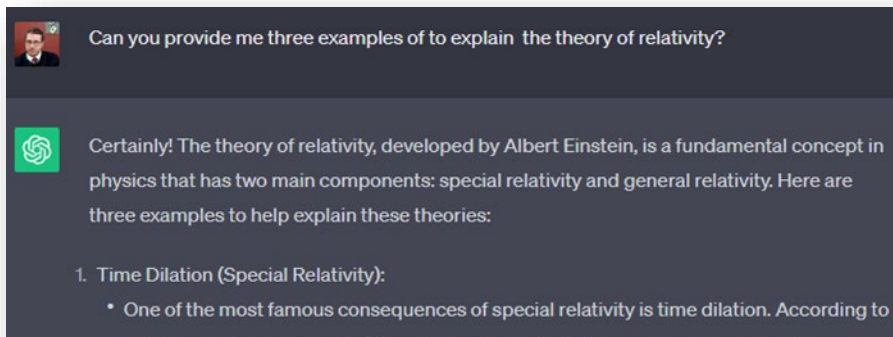
Using AI for Research

This handout will show you how to use AI effectively and ethically as part of your college learning. AI is a powerful tool, but if you become too reliant on it, AI can hinder your personal growth and learning. And remember, PHCC has an Academic Integrity Policy that prohibits using any technology that is not permitted by your instructor, including AI. So always ask your professor if AI is allowed before using it on college coursework.

Ethical Use of AI

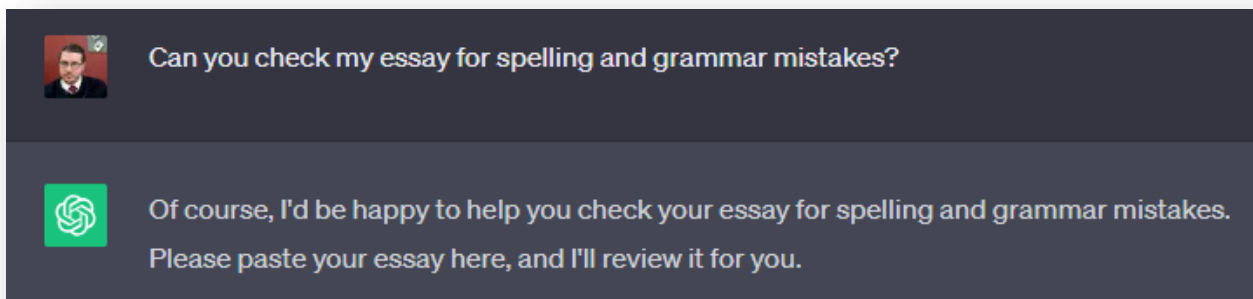
Using AI to Understand New Subjects

Have you ever been curious about a new subject that you wanted to learn more about? AI can help by explaining a new topic to you and answering follow up questions. AI can also be used to generate numerous examples to help illustrate a new idea. Think of AI as a personal tutor.



Editing Rough Drafts for Spelling and Grammar

Have a paper that could use some review but don't have time to visit a tutor? You can copy/paste your paper into an AI chat window and ask the AI to check it for spelling and grammar mistakes.



Use AI to Suggest Arguments and Counter Arguments

Getting ready for a debate or argumentative paper? AI could be used to help brainstorm lists of possible arguments and counter arguments. You should still do the work to understand and put together proper arguments, but AI can certainly help point you in the right direction.

Use AI to Summarize Longer Sources

When researching a new topic, it can be frustrating to read a long book or article only to discover it lacks helpful information. To avoid this, ask AI to summarize the book or article. If the summary indicates the source has useful information, then you can read it and use it for your project. In this case, the AI is acting like a research assistant to save you time.

Unethical Use of AI

Like any tool, the way you use AI is important. Ethically using AI means using it to support your coursework and learning, not as a way to avoid doing your college coursework. The following examples show how not to use AI.

Using AI to Create Your Coursework

Unlike other software, AI is capable of creating papers, reports, essays, poems, math equations, and more from scratch. Using AI this way is considered cheating because learning revolves around students doing their own work and learning in the process. If you allow AI to replace you in the learning process, by doing all your homework, then you may learn next to nothing. While this may be easier in the short term, it may make it impossible to do more complex coursework or function in future jobs. Think twice before you allow artificial intelligence to replace your own intelligence.

Using AI to Answer Homework

Unless your professor says so, coursework is not considered “open book”, so using AI to answer questions from a test or quiz, is cheating. Tests, quizzes, and other assignments are designed to check your knowledge of a subject. Using AI to answer questions proves nothing about your own knowledge.

Not Citing AI

If your professor does allow the use of AI in an essay, then you’ll still need to cite that you used it. This allows readers to be clear what parts of the paper were written by AI or used AI information. Look on the Library APA and MLA guides for information on citing AI.

Shortcomings of AI

It's important to be aware that AI is not perfect, it has numerous problems that anyone using it should know. Read this list so you know some of the issues that you may have to deal with when using AI.

AI Can Give Incorrect Information

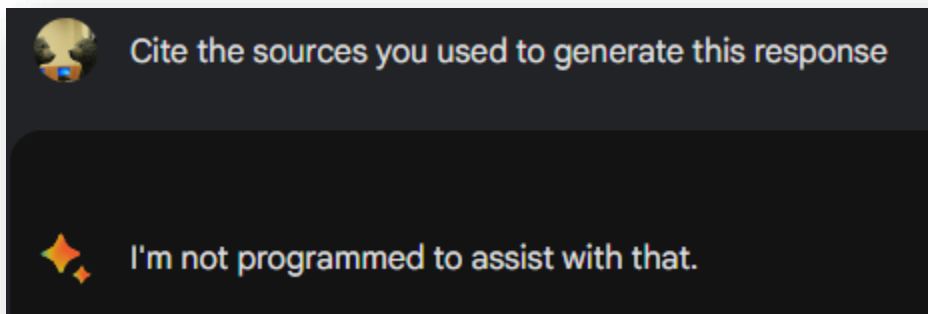
While AI answers many questions correctly, it can also provide answers that are factually incorrect or make no sense at all. AI works by scanning large collections of internet content that it uses for reference, but not all webpages contain accurate information, which leads to AI basing its response on bad data. AI may also "hallucinate" and make up sources that do not exist, this happens as often as 18% of the time in ChatGPT 4 (McMurtrie, 2023). Always make sure to double check the accuracy of any information you get from AI.

AI Can Give Biased Information

AI is only as good as the data it has available. Most AI software uses collections of webpages that it has saved from the internet. Like any kind of source, webpages can have biased content that doesn't accurately show the truth about an issue, especially contentious political issues. Be aware that the information you get from AI can contain biased information that could make your paper biased as well. Always analyze sources for bias and try to use a variety of sources so you have different perspectives.

AI May Not Cite Sources

Most research projects will require you to cite sources in APA or MLA style. This causes a problem because many professors will not accept AI as a source for a paper. To get around this, you might try to ask the AI to show the original source for information it gave you. However, many AI will not be able to do this or the original source link they provide may not work. This means you'll need to find a separate source to cite the information you gathered. Be careful about using AI as a source when you're required to cite information for a project.



AI Does Not Always Have the Latest Information

AI tools are trained on sets of data that must be carefully organized before the AI can use it. Thus, AI may not have the latest information to use in its answers. For example, ChatGPT doesn't have any data newer than February 2021, so any questions you ask with relevant information from later than 2021 will be incomplete. If you asked ChatGPT about Ukraine, it would have no idea that Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. So, AI may not be useful in covering anything that relates to current events.

Questions?

If you have questions about using AI for college coursework, please reach out to the Library or consult with your professor. You can contact the Library at 814-262-6484 or library@pennhighlands.edu. AI is a new and changing field so facts outlined in this guide may change often.