

The Essential Douglas College AI How-To Manual



All alterations and added information were written by Alicia Arding and Shannon Moist.

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Ground Rules

- Every class has a syllabus that tells you about the plan for learning and the instructor's expectations. Read the syllabus carefully and ensure you understand the rules the instructor has given for the use of AI. If AI use is NOT mentioned, ask your professor for clarification before starting any assignments.
- AI policies will vary between **instructors**, **courses**, and even **projects**.
 - Some faculty members will encourage or even require you to use AI, while others will prohibit it. Those decisions are based on the learning goals for the course.
 - Keep track of the policies for each course and assignment so you don't get confused.

Apply the highest ethical standards when using AI

- **Originality:** Ensure all work submitted is your own, representing your unique voice and ideas. When permitted, you can use AI tools for help but not to do the work for you, unless your instructor says it's okay to use AI to write or create your assignment for you.
- **Acknowledgment and attribution:** Follow your instructors' and your institution's rules for acknowledging or citing AI use. If you're uncertain, ask about it. Most citation styles (including APA, MLA, and Chicago) provide guidelines for citing generative AI work.
- **Data security and safety:** Any information you share with an AI tool is no longer private and may be used in ways you can't control. Guard your data vigilantly! Never share sensitive, personal, or confidential information about yourself, others, your school, or your workplace with AI systems.

While it may be tempting to rely on AI in many aspects of your life, you should always turn to trusted family, friends, faculty, mentors, counselors, support groups, or professionals for advice about issues such as:

- Difficulties with or worries over your physical health or illnesses
- Mental health questions and issues, including personal crises and emotional distress
- Complex relationship issues
- Spiritual and faith questions
- Personal legal and financial matters (never share any bank account information, passwords, or other sensitive information online)
- Personal and family dilemmas, disappointments, or deaths
- Important life decisions and stressors, such as career choices, your responsibilities to those in your life, struggles with addiction, and so on



Resources at the College

Douglas College has many skilled professionals in many areas to help you succeed academically, emotionally, and professionally. Some of the resources available, include:

- [Accessibility Services](#) – works with you and your instructor to create an individual plan for accommodations and support.
- [Enrolment Services](#) and [Student Success Advising](#) – Enrolment Services and Student Success Advisors are here to help with Douglas College applications and admissions, booking assessments, course planning, academic goal setting, strategies for academic success and financial aid options.
- [Learning Centre](#) – provides free tutoring to current Douglas College students for: course specific tutoring, writing help & submit-a-draft, study skills and time management workshops, and more.
- [Counselling](#) – Douglas College students can talk to a trained professional counsellor to help navigate personal and academic issues for free
- [Library](#) – provides you with expert research and citation help, study space, equipment, academic resources, and more.

Resources at the College

- [Career Services](#) – supports Douglas College student with career advising, career workshops, co-op education programs, business internships, and career boost programs for post-degree students
- [DSU](#) – provides advocacy, campus life, and services to help support Douglas College students
- [Student Life](#) – helps keep students connect to the college community and supports student with educational campaigns
- [Linked In Learning](#) – an online learning platform that offers thousands of video courses on a variety of different topics taught by industry experts



Before you use AI, make sure you can answer “YES” to these questions

- ☐ My school and my instructor allow the use of the AI tools I’m considering for this assignment
- ☐ I clearly understand when and how I can use AI for this assignment
- ☐ I am using my own thoughts, ideas, words, and tone of voice
- ☐ If I am using AI, I have checked sources generated by AI and properly cited any facts, statistics, or quotes
- ☐ I have critically analyzed any AI output I am using and identified any false, biased, or harmful information
- ☐ I have documented where and how I used AI, and cited that use according to my professor’s expectations
- ☐ I have not used confidential, protected, or copyrighted information in my assignment

When the assignment is complete

- ☐ I can explain my findings and demonstrate full understanding of my assignment without the aid of AI
- ☐ I can prove what sources I used and how I verified the information

Some ways you can use AI

Remember to carefully check if and how you can use AI in your assignments. If you have permission to use AI, below are some ways AI can be used in your schoolwork.

Writing assistance: Use AI at discrete parts of your writing process, for example, to brainstorm or generate ideas, help you think about organization, adjust your writing style to suit your audience and purpose, and to check sentence clarity, grammar and citations. Always remain the primary author of your work.

Creative assistance: AI tools can spark your imagination in production of art, graphic design, music, performing arts and other creative expressions. Be sure to credit creators of the original works.

Study assistance: Use AI tools as a tutor partner; ask it to create study notes, challenge you with quizzes and test your understanding. Make sure you critically evaluate the accuracy of these materials as you study – does the information match your notes and course textbook? Are the sources used by AI reliable?

Research and information gathering: Ask AI to distill or explain complex concepts in language you can understand. Always critically evaluate AI output to ensure the information is credible and relevant. Read original sources to verify facts and gain a deeper understanding.

Data analysis and visualization: Use AI to interpret and summarize data sets and create data visualizations. Always verify the work and make sure you are able to explain and justify the results.

Academic integrity in the age of AI

Cheating and AI

AI has complicated the concept of academic integrity. Some rationalize that “everybody uses AI,” or “AI is just like any other technology tool.”

However, it is important to always remember that ***the work you turn in must be authentically yours***. Copying AI-produced content verbatim and representing it as your own without attribution is cheating.

Cheating with AI deprives you of the opportunity to develop your own skills and intellectual confidence. Your personal development requires you to do the hard work of learning, not cognitively offloading this work to an AI tool.

“Crossing the line” into cheating

If your instructor says no use of AI in their class, or on individual assignments, follow the rules.

Remember that the rules may vary on certain assignments. In some cases, you may even be required to use AI.

To avoid crossing the line, ask for specific instructions on the use of AI on each assignment.

Academic integrity in the age of AI

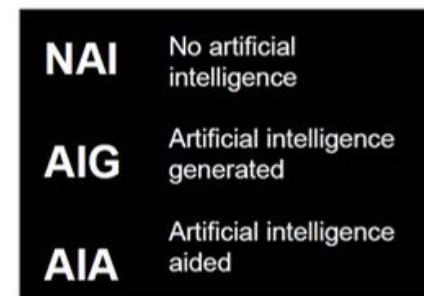
When “crossing the line” can be a bit fuzzy

Some assignments will permit or even require the use of AI. In these cases, keep these basic principles in mind:

- When AI is allowed, use it to get oriented to a topic and gather information. Then, after doing your own research and producing a rough draft on your own, share it with the AI systems and ask for feedback and ideas about what you are missing or what could be revised. This will allow you to remain the main author of the project, with AI providing feedback
- No matter how you use AI, the key is to be honest and transparent, giving clear attribution to the ways AI contributed to the work

Transparent use of artificial intelligence

- We should all be moving towards being transparent about how we use or don't use AI in our work. The icons below are one way you can do that.



Transparent Use of Artificial Intelligence image by Martine Peters is used under a CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

AI tools you might encounter in your education

Generative AI Tools such as ChatGPT, CLaude, Gemini, Copilot, Perplexity, MetaAI, Deepseek, Mistral, Grok

Cautions

- Verify everything: AI output can sound confident, but these tools can make up (“hallucinate”) or misrepresent information, draw false conclusions, make major mistakes, and generate fake sources
- AI doesn’t “understand” the way humans do; these models lack real-world experience and context, so they don’t easily handle irony, humor, or complex metaphors
- Don’t just read AI-generated summaries; take time to read original articles and understand detailed points and context
- Be aware that many of today’s AI tools are not always trained on the most recent or accurate information
- Challenge AI responses and require the AI to justify its output by citing sources and data
- Beware that AI output often has biases from its source material
- Don’t offload your learning and thinking to AI; challenge yourself to learn and exercise your mental muscles

AI tools you might encounter in your education

Specialized AI tools for research, writing and coding such as NotebookLM, Grammarly, Elicit, GitHub Copilot, Consensus

Cautions

- Always remain the primary author; don't ask the AI to produce a complete first draft that you submit as your own work
- Remember that writing is a form of critical thinking, an essential part of learning that you must engage in yourself; use AI to augment, not replace, your own thinking and writing
- Keep track of how you use AI and cite its use following guidelines specified for your writing project
- Always critically evaluate AI outputs and make sure the language sounds natural, engaging, and authentic; if you don't understand words or concepts introduced by AI, don't include them in your assignments as your own work
- Don't become over reliant on AI, using it as a writing crutch; work to develop your own writing voice, style, and personality

AI tools you might encounter in your education

Creative AI tools that generate images, videos and music, such as DALL-E, Midjourney, Adobe Firefly, Stability.ai, Canva, Runway ML, Sora, Suno

Cautions

- Use AI output only as a catalyst for your own creative ideas
- Clearly disclose the use of AI-generated content
- Be on guard for stereotypes, biases, or blandness in AI-generated materials
- AI responses may be based on copyrighted materials, so compare the output to existing works and don't use company logos, characters, or styles
- Keep track of the AI tools used, your prompts and any modifications you made to the outputs
- Never use AI to create deepfakes or offensive content that could harm, mislead, or exploit others

AI tools you might encounter in your education

Analytical AI tools specialized in business intelligence, math, statistics and data visualization, such as Tableau, Wolfram Alpha, PowerBI, DataRobot, RapidMiner, and Python tools

Cautions

- Current generative AI platforms are not great mathematical tools and may return errors and struggle with simple calculations, solving word problems, or completing multi-step math equations
- Don't inherently trust the data output of AI tools; use AI to generate code only where the correctness of the solution can be independently verified with other specialized tools
- Never share a dataset with an AI tool in a way that would violate the rights or privacy of others
- Data and information owned by a company or organization, including personal and business information, should never be shared with an AI tool without permission

AI tools you might encounter in your education

Embedded AI capabilities in software programs, such as Adobe applications, Google Docs, Zoom, Microsoft 365 Copilot

Open-source and customized tools available on communities like Github, Hugging Face, Nvidia, and chatbot aggregators like Poe

The AI tools listed here are examples; there are many others available and many new ones are released regularly.

Using AI for study and learning assistance

Cautions

- Always remain an active, engaged learner who uses AI as a study resource in a quest for deeper understanding
- Try to work with groups and friends to study together, or check out the resources at the Learning Centre – you will learn in ways that AI systems cannot simulate
- Always ask permission from everyone in a meeting or discussion before video or audio recording - respect people's privacy
- Always take good notes in class and while you're studying – AI systems are not a substitute for processing ideas with your own mind and making human judgments about information
- Develop learning and critical thinking skills independent of AI tools; you will use these capabilities at work and throughout life
- Uploading notes, assignments, or other resources from your instructor, or any work protected by copyright (including articles, videos, and datasets) can violate copyright laws and intellectual property rights



Using AI for study and learning assistance

Skill up on prompts

When you ask questions of one of the major generative AI tools, you'll learn how to have conversations similar to human interactions, and then critique the results carefully. These back-and-forth exchanges will produce the best results.

5 guidelines for a good prompt

1. Use correct spelling and grammar. Write in complete sentences.
2. Be clear, specific, and detailed about your request to the AI.
3. Provide context and perspective to focus the AI output.
4. Break down complex tasks into multiple short prompts.
5. Specify the desired format, tone and style of the output.
6. Further clarify and ask more detailed questions in response to the AI output.

Using AI for study and learning assistance

Basic prompt formula

Declare a **[ROLE]**. Give **[CONTEXT]**. Create a **[TASK]** and specify **[FORMAT]**.

You are a **college student**. You are taking a political science course and have an assignment to write a research paper on the topic of **disinformation in modern societies**. Please **produce a list of suggestions and reminders to keep in mind while writing an academic paper**.

Example

You are a **college student**. You are studying for a midterm exam in a first-year anatomy and physiology course. Please produce a **50 multiple choice question practice test focusing on the digestive system, the nervous system, and the urinary system**.

Using AI beyond your classes

AI can be a valuable tool in your life. You can tap into it for help throughout your college experience. There are many options but here are a few examples:

- Set up a calendar that organizes your schedule, including times to study and socialize
- Create a plan for developing healthy habits, including an exercise schedule, tips for high-quality sleep, ideas for nutritious meals, and ways to manage stress
- Help you evaluate products or services you wish to purchase
- Create itineraries for study abroad experiences and time away from campus
- Pursue an independent research project, generating ideas, conducting a literature review, running simulations, and critiquing your findings
- Plan activities for your student organization, such as service-learning or social events to engage group members
- Find films, TV programs, books, music, and games that fit your interests



7 Essential Principles

1. Know and follow your school's rules

Your institution, its departments, and individual faculty members have established academic integrity policies, and AI guidelines and expectations designed to optimize your learning and growth. Read and understand these policies and be aware that they may change over time. If you're uncertain, ask questions.

2. Learn about AI

Everyone's future professional and personal success will be influenced by AI systems. Learn how they work, and understand their strengths and weaknesses. Ask questions, be curious, try things, share what you know and learn from others.

3. Do the right thing

Learn to use AI ethically. Ensure that the work you submit is truly your own. Properly disclose and cite how you use AI-generated content. Deepen your critical thinking skills and ability to evaluate AI-generated content and spot false information, biases, and fake images, video and audio.

4. Think beyond your major

AI brings together knowledge from all disciplines. Develop a multidisciplinary mindset and explore classes in a wide range of subjects. Develop strong skills in using, analyzing, and communicating about data and consider getting certifications related to AI.

7 Essential Principles

5. Commit to lifelong learning

We are only at the beginning of the development of generative AI. New tools and AI uses will continually emerge. Always be on the lookout for what has changed or been recently released. Work collaboratively with your peers and mentors. Adopt a lifelong learning mindset.

6. Prioritize privacy and security

Always remember that AI systems are not private; you have limited or no control over how your data will be used. Use only reputable platforms, understand the terms of service, and share as little information as possible about yourself or others.

7. Cultivate your human abilities

Deepen your empathy and social skills. Stay focused on building strong relationships and thriving in the non-digital world. Exercise your technology-free creativity. Keep your unique human talents sharp in an environment filled with AI interactions.

