12 Top Tips for Parents and Educators
USING GENERATIVE AI IN THE CLASSROOM

Since the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022, the education sector has already seen the potential of generative AI as a tool for planning, content creation and learning support. However, this technology is accelerating so quickly that some teachers aren't sure how to make the most of it. This guide offers some tips for implementing generative AI in your classroom.

ASK WHAT IT NEEDS

With ChatGPT, you could begin by asking what it needs you to input to provide the best response. You could say something like: *"I want you to act as a [subject] teacher. I will provide the syllabus and you will provide me with a scheme of work. First, tell me what you need to know from me to create an excellent, differentiated scheme of work."*

START BROAD AND ZOOM IN

If you ask ChatGPT to give you a fully differentiated and resourced scheme of work or lesson plan from just one prompt, you'll probably be disappointed. Instead, begin by requesting a weekly outline; then a daily breakdown; then a single lesson; then the resources. That way, you'll get a lot more detail and can tweak the output if it's not quite right.

SPECIFIC ROLES CAN BE HELPFUL

Because language models like ChatGPT are trained on human data, they're good at roleplaying. Asking it to assume a specific role – and telling it the tone you wish it to take – will likely make its output closer to what you're looking for. For example: *"You will take the role of an expert AQA GCSE maths teacher. Write a syllabus guide for AQA GCSE maths in a friendly, reassuring tone."*

CREATE 'CHARACTER' BOTS

You can create your own chat bots, granting students free access to ChatGPT without the need to log in. On zapier.com, choose 'Interfaces' then select 'Chatbot'. Filling in the fields allows you to customise the chatbot's persona – 'helpful teacher' or 'literary analyst', for example – and create an action that copies its response to the clipboard. You can then make this available to your students.

AVOID PLAGIARISM DETECTORS

We advise caution in using AI plagiarism checkers as they aren't reliable yet: they're easy to fool and often give false positives. Some students have already been wrongly accused of cheating, which can damage their relationship with their teacher. It's often better to use your own judgement (if you know your own students' style well enough) or consider other options, such as controlled assessments.

WHAT *IS* GENERATIVE AI?

Generative AI encompasses the family of artificial intelligences capable of creating content. This includes large language models such as ChatGPT and Google Bard, text-to-image diffusion models including Midjourney and Stable Diffusion, the newer crop of apps which can create videos from text, like RunwayML, and music-focused software such as Google's MusicLM.

TRY THE OPEN AI PLAYGROUND

On platform.openai.com, click the 'Playground' option. Choose the chat function from the drop-down menu, then select the 16K model. This will quadruple the token size – meaning the programme's memory – meaning that you can paste in an entire chapter of a novel, an act from a play, or a section of a textbook, and ask the AI questions about it. This can make the GPT model much more useful.
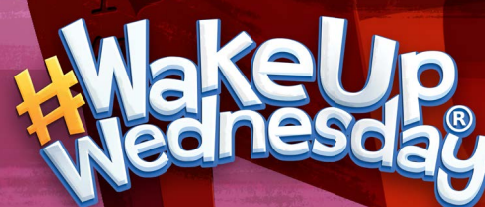
DIFFERENT TOOLS FOR DIFFERENT JOBS

ChatGPT is impressive, but it's not the only tool in the box. Perplexity is a user-friendly, web-enabled AI that runs the most up-to-date version of ChatGPT in the background – while Pi is a friendlier-sounding chatbot that students can get into discussions with on almost any subject. They both encourage learners to go deeper by asking probing questions or suggesting ways to explore a topic.

THINK BEYOND 'THE NORM'

Gamma is an app which uses AI to plan presentations, while Notion software employs AI to change the tone and length of text and explore ideas. Even without the AI elements, however, both can be worthwhile additions for any school as online alternatives to applications such as Word and PowerPoint. Furthermore, they are free to use, with free AI credits included.

SET UP AN 'ASK THE AI' STATION

It can be difficult for school-age children to effectively engage with ChatGPT, as signing in requires a phone number and two-factor authentication. It can also be problematic regarding data protection in many countries. Instead, you could set up one or two laptops in the classroom as 'Ask ChatGPT Workstations', which you can direct your students to use at appropriate moments.

BE CRITICAL USERS

Because they sound so convincing, generative AIs' occasional missteps can cause problems. Teach your students to think critically about what AI tells them and fact check its responses, particularly those that cite references. Models like Google Bard, while good for providing prompts, have already garnered a reputation for confidently making up references and even website URLs.

GENERATE LOTS OF IDEAS

When exploring a topic with ChatGPT, ask it to generate ten, twenty, or even fifty ideas around the theme. For example: *"Give me ten interesting and unusual lesson starters to hook my Year 6 class into the water cycle."* You can then overlay your human intelligence and choose the best option for your class. Chances are, some won't be suitable, but you only need one to fit your needs!

TAILOR YOUR RESOURCES

ChatGPT is excellent for differentiating resources to fit specific audiences, as it can rewrite any resource to better suit a different age or ability range. You could also ask it for alternative ways to present information, such as explaining a complex concept in the style of a movie scene or giving three simpler analogies that a much younger pupil would be more likely to understand. t

Meet Our Expert

Darren Coxon is Chief Operating Officer for Britus Education, a Bahrain-based company with nine K–12 international schools in the Middle East and North Africa region. A teacher and leader for 25 years, Darren is a blogger and thought leader on AI in education, who hosts The EducAIte Podcast. Later this year, he will publish Re.Generate, a book on how AI is set to change the education world.

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