



Using AI for Writing Feedback

AI-generated feedback should help you think deeply about your writing. AI can help you refine your work by probing for gaps and weaknesses in your argument or structure. This handout provides tips on how to effectively and ethically use AI to get feedback on your writing.

Why ask for feedback?

The goal of AI feedback is to stimulate your thinking during your revisions. This way of using AI vastly differs from using AI to create or “correct” arguments for you. AI feedback can allow you to improve your writing without compromising your personal writing and thinking skills.

Considerations

Here are some considerations to keep in mind before using AI for feedback:

Academic integrity:

When using AI tools, it is your responsibility to make sure you have explicit permission to do so. Check your course outline or assignment instructions for policies about AI use. If you are unsure, ask your instructor. Never assume that AI is permitted.

Sycophancy:

AI is designed to provide positive feedback, often confirming your inputs – even if they contain bias or inaccuracy. This is called sycophancy. It is important to recognize AI’s tendency to give sycophantic responses when seeking feedback.

Accuracy:

AI is known to fabricate information, a phenomenon commonly referred to as a “hallucination.” You must validate every AI output (i.e. double-checking facts and citations) to verify accuracy.

Intellectual property:

AI systems often use user input to train their algorithms, so you may be granting the AI broad rights to use any input or uploaded documents. This is a concern when uploading copyrighted material or course materials (e.g. lecture transcripts, outlines, rubrics, assignment instructions, etc.) as you may be granting access to others’ intellectual property without their permission.

Lastly, you should keep in mind that AI feedback is not the same as human feedback. While we can now effectively communicate with AI, useful dialogue between you and your peers, TAs, and instructors can offer valuable insights that AI tools cannot replicate.

Prompting Basics

Learning about different types of prompts can help you craft a targeted input.

Shot-based prompting

Shot based prompting is a technique that uses examples (known as “shots”) before asking an AI tool to perform a task. You may be most familiar with Zero-shot prompting, which only provides the AI tool an instruction and does not provide any examples. Zero-shot prompting allows the AI to rely solely on its training data to perform the task. One-shot and few-shot prompts provide examples (often in the form of input-output pairs), instructing the AI tool to consider the patterns present in those examples when performing the task. Few-shot can be more effective than zero-shot prompting for academic feedback because the examples help the AI tool provide clearer feedback which better fits the requirements of your assignment.

Single-shot Prompt Example:

Example:

Thesis: "Industrialization improved society."

Feedback: "This thesis is too broad. Specify which aspects of society improved and signpost the evidence you will use."

Now, review this thesis:

Thesis: "The French Revolution was purely a political event."

Tip: To receive more effective feedback from AI tools, you can use human-generated feedback to inform your prompts. For instance, you can make an appointment with [SSC Writing Support](#) to get feedback from a writing tutor on one section of your essay. You can then use the tutor’s feedback to create example prompts to help an AI tool generate consistent feedback on the rest of the essay.

Contextual prompting

Contextual prompting is a prompting technique which involves giving the AI tool background information, context, and/or constraints to help the AI tool tailor its’ response to a particular situation or audience. Providing context can be particularly useful when asking for academic feedback, as it helps ensure that the AI output is relevant and aligned with the assignment expectations. You can consider specifying information such as your role (e.g. 1st year undergraduate student), discipline, assignment type (e.g. research paper, literature review, etc.), and citation style to help the AI tool provide more targeted feedback.

Contextual Prompt Example:

“I am a third-year undergraduate student writing a history essay that requires the use of primary and secondary sources with Chicago style formatting and citations. Provide feedback on how effectively I analyze and integrate sources in my essay, without rewriting the text.”

Common prompt types: Quick reference guide

Prompt Type	Description	Useful For	Example
Zero-shot prompt	A prompt that gives instructions without examples.	Useful for a quick, general response.	“Summarize this article in 5 bullet points.”
Few-shot prompt	A prompt that provides a few examples of the task you want the AI to perform.	Useful for helping the model learn your desired structure or tone.	“Here are 2 example summaries in an academic tone... Now, provide feedback on how I can write my summary in a more formal academic tone.”
Instructional prompt	A prompt that explicitly tells the AI what to do by providing direct commands and constraints.	Useful for setting boundaries and expectations for how the AI will perform the task.	“Provide feedback on the argument and organization of my paper using guiding questions. Do not rewrite my work. Do not correct grammar or style.”
Role-based prompt	A prompt that identifies the user’s role or asks the AI to assume a particular role, persona, or viewpoint when completing the task.	Useful for receiving feedback that reflects particular disciplinary perspectives and academic writing conventions	“You are a history professor. Provide feedback on my essay focusing on my use of sources, citations, and disciplinary writing conventions.”
Contextual prompt	A prompt that includes a relevant background or framing to guide AI responses.	Useful for tailoring AI responses to a specific audience or setting.	“This is a sociology essay requiring critical analysis of sources. Provide feedback on how effectively I analyse and integrate sources in my body paragraphs.”

Adapted from <https://mitsloanedtech.mit.edu/ai/basics/effective-prompts/>. Copyright 2025 by MIT Sloan.

Combining prompt-styles

For more specific and effective feedback you can also combine prompt styles.

Example:

“I am a third-year undergraduate student. I am attaching a draft of my paper for a chemistry course. Please identify strengths and weaknesses in my argumentation. Provide your reasoning for the feedback along with specific examples from my paper. Do not rewrite anything.”

This prompt combines role-based, contextual, and instructional prompting. You should also note that this prompt also introduces a constraint by telling the AI tool not to edit or rewrite content. This constraint ensures good academic integrity by preserving the author’s voice and autonomy.

Common issues with AI feedback

When seeking feedback from an AI tool, you should consider AI outputs to be suggestions, and you should critically evaluate whether or not to implement these suggestions. Below are some common issues that can occur in AI-generated feedback, that you should consider when evaluating AI output. Each issue is paired with a prompting tip to help you avoid or reduce the problem.

Conflated feedback

If you ask an AI to perform several tasks in a single prompt, it may combine the different areas of feedback into a broad generalized response instead of breaking the feedback into distinct parts.

Tip: To prevent the AI from combining feedback criteria into a single general response, ensure that your prompt separates the different areas of feedback and instructs the AI to address each point separately. Asking the AI to address feedback topic in a particular order or using headings can help you direct the AI response.

Example:

“I am a university student seeking feedback on my attached draft essay. Please provide separate feedback on the following areas, using the headings I have provided:

Structure: Provide feedback on organization of the overall essay as well as flow within and between paragraphs. Identify strengths and weaknesses.

Argumentation: Provide feedback on the strength, clarity and logical development of my arguments. Identify arguments that may require further development and explain why.

Use of Sources: Provide feedback on the integration and citation of my sources. Identify any arguments that may require more support from sources.

Please provide feedback only. Do not rewrite any part of my paper or suggest new content.”

Repetitive responses

AI tools use your conversation history as context to predict what kind of response will likely fulfill your requests. Consequently, sometimes the chatbot will carry over elements from earlier output, even if you want to change the topic. This can make feedback less accurate or relevant

Tip: There are several ways to reduce this tendency. These include: explicitly telling chatbot that you are switching topics, telling the AI not to repeat earlier feedback or starting over by clearing the chat or starting a new conversation to essentially “refresh” the chatbot.

Follow-up prompts

When seeking feedback, don’t limit yourself to just one prompt. Instead, engage in successive rounds of feedback to fine-tune the outputs. Here are some suggestions for fine-tuning for particular writing goals:

Goal	Sample Prompts
Developing writing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “How can I better integrate quotations?”• “Give me tips on how to better explicate this quotation.”• “List all the important changes I have to make to strengthen my paper.”
Mitigating sycophancy and bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “So far, you’ve only agreed with what I’m saying. Can you provide reasonable counterarguments and diverse perspectives?”• “Can you identify gaps and weaknesses in my arguments?”
Deciding what sections to cut or simplify	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I want to reduce the word count, and I’m thinking about limiting my descriptions. Considering the non-technical audience, give me pros and cons of removing the overview/definition of this term [inset term].”• “I am worried that my methodology section is unnecessarily wordy. Consider how methodology sections are typically written, give me advice on how to evaluate what is worth keeping and what I should trim.”
Specifying areas of concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “These two paragraphs seem to jump abruptly from topic to topic. Give me advice on how I can improve the transition between my ideas.”
Asking for clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “You called my writing compelling and my arguments robust. Can you point me to specific excerpts that show these strengths? Explain your reasoning.”

Additional Tip: Using a Rubric

With permission, you can upload a rubric to the AI tool and ask it to evaluate your work based on the rubric. Alternatively, you can create your own rubric based on how you want the AI tool to evaluate your work.

Sample prompt: “Evaluate my paper based on the criteria outlined in the attached rubric. For each criterion, tell me (1) where you think I would currently score, (2) your rationale behind the score along with specific examples from my text, and (3) what I can do to score higher, if applicable.”

Conclusion

Feedback is a valuable resource for personal improvement. AI feedback can be useful to help you refine your work, but you must keep your own thoughts central. Additionally, AI feedback should never replace the feedback of a qualified academic or professional, and AI Feedback will likely not be as specific and relevant as your instructor’s feedback. So always remember to approach your instructor directly for more nuanced questions and concerns regarding your coursework.

References

MIT Sloan (n.d.). *Effective prompts for AI: The Essentials*. MIT Sloan Teaching & Learning Technologies. <https://mitsloanedtech.mit.edu/ai/basics/effective-prompts/>