



Generative AI: Getting Started

An introductory guide to using AI as a productivity engine and thinking partner.



Treat Generative AI as a collaborative thinking assistant.

Generative AI is software trained on massive amounts of human knowledge to generate helpful responses to questions.



The Role:

A thinking partner, first-draft generator, and editor.



The Process:

Works best as a collaboration, not a one-off command.



The Reality Check:

AI can be wrong.

“Consider AI a thinking assistant.”

A versatile tool for drafting, summarizing, and brainstorming.



Drafting:

Emails, outlines, agendas, plans.



Synthesizing:

Summarize documents, explain complex topics simply.



Ideation:

Brainstorm ideas, discover insights from data.



Refinement: Rewrite text, improve code, act as an editor.



Creation:

Generate images or presentations.

Not all AI accounts are created equal.

Where AI Lives

- Conversational Assistants
- Writing & Productivity tools
- Meeting & Note-taking software
- Image & Creative engines
- Built-in Workplace integrations

Free Accounts

- Older models
- Lower priority (slower)
- **Fewer privacy and security controls**

Paid Accounts

- Advanced models
- High priority
- **Greater privacy/security controls**

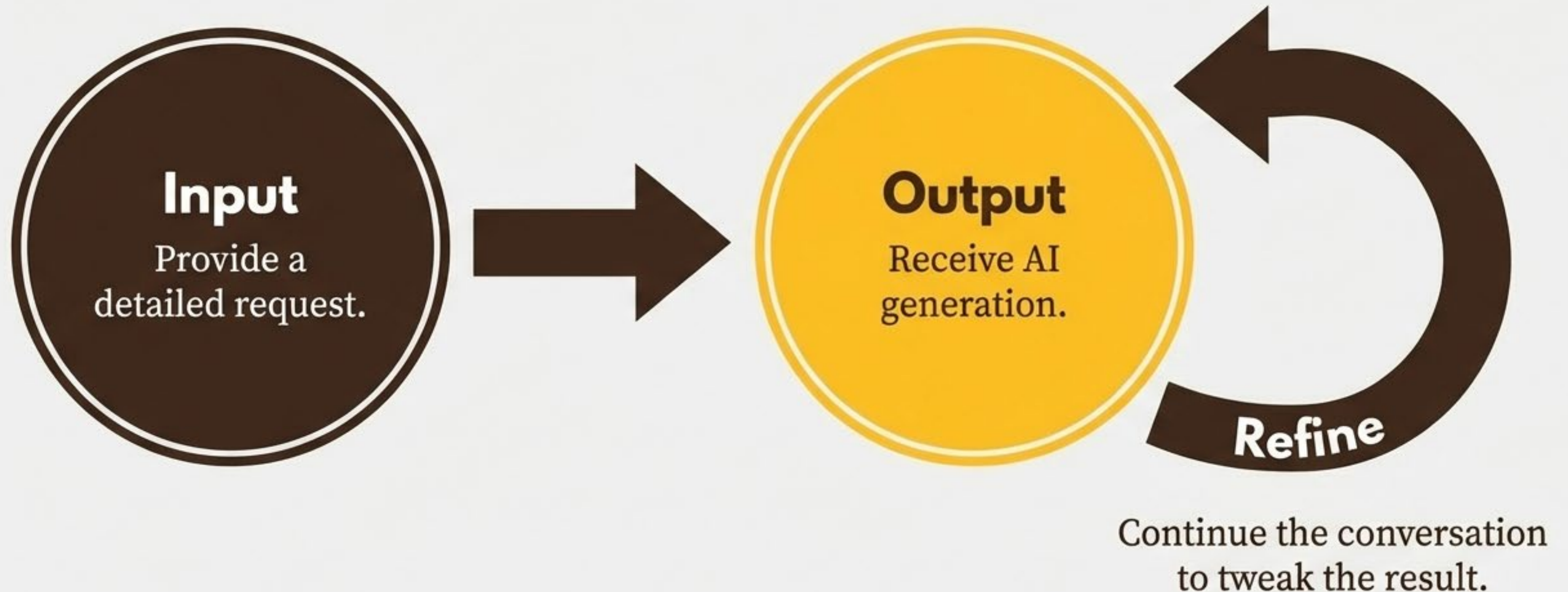
*Why log in?
To utilize memory,
revisit chats, and
get tailored
responses.*

Examples of popular AI tools

- ChatGPT
- Gemini
- Claude
- Copilot
- Perplexity
- NotebookLM
- DALL-E
- Microsoft Designer
- Canva's Magic Media

The art of conversational prompting.

The instructions you give an AI are called a “prompt.” Success requires an iterative process, not just a single detailed request.



The formula for high-quality outputs.

Defining the Anatomy of a Prompt



Role/Persona

Assign a specific identity, expertise, or perspective for the AI to adopt (e.g., expert advisor, creative writer).



Task

Clearly state the primary action or objective you want the AI to perform (e.g., summarize, analyze, brainstorm).



Context

Provide background information, constraints, or specific details to guide the AI's response (e.g., target audience, tone, limitations).



Format

Specify the desired structure or presentation style for the AI's output (e.g., bulleted list, table, essay).

Example 1 – Faculty: Creating a Lesson Activity

Role: Act as an experienced university instructor who teaches first-year students.

Task: Design a 20-minute in-class active learning activity about academic integrity.

Context: This is for a first-year seminar course with 30 students. Many students are unfamiliar with university expectations around citation, collaboration, and use of AI tools.

Format: Provide step-by-step instructions, materials needed, and 3 discussion questions.

Full Prompt (Combined): Act as an experienced university instructor who teaches first-year students. Design a 20-minute in-class active learning activity about academic integrity for a first-year seminar course with 30 students. Many students are unfamiliar with university expectations around citation, collaboration, and use of AI tools. Provide step-by-step instructions, materials needed, and three discussion questions.

Example 2 – Staff: Professional Email Drafting

Role: Act as a professional university staff communications coordinator.

Task: Draft a reminder email encouraging employees to complete required accessibility training.

Context: The training deadline is April 24. The tone should be supportive rather than disciplinary. Many employees feel overwhelmed with required trainings.

Format: Write a concise email under 150 words with a clear subject line and friendly tone.

Full Prompt (Combined): Act as a professional university staff communications coordinator. Draft a reminder email encouraging employees to complete required accessibility training. The deadline is April 24, and the tone should be supportive rather than disciplinary because many employees feel overwhelmed with required trainings. Write a concise email under 150 words with a clear subject line and friendly tone.

If you wouldn't share it on the web, don't share it with AI.

AI tools may store and learn from your data.
Protect institutional and personal privacy.



WARNING: Don't paste sensitive or confidential data.

AI generates patterns, not facts.



The Risk: AI does not “understand”.

- Invents facts or citations (Hallucinations)
- Misinterprets context
- Produces confident but incorrect answers

The Remedy: Verify Outputs.

- Fact-check important info
- Review drafts carefully
- Apply professional judgment

Pro Tip: Consider all AI output as a draft that requires human review.

Apply a human lens to watch for bias.

AI reflects the data it was trained on. This may include historical bias, incomplete perspectives, or outdated practices.



Key Takeaway: Apply your content knowledge and critical thinking skills to bring the draft to a finished product.

Pro Tip: Consider all AI output as a draft that requires human review.

Understand and follow organizational policies.



Institutional Guidance

- Review guidelines on approved AI tools.
 - Follow data governance rules.
- Adhere to attribution or disclosure expectations.
 - Ask when unsure.

AI is new and evolving rapidly. Guidelines may change—stay aware.

Follow an ethical process.

- Think of AI as a **collaborative thinking partner** (rather than as a piece of software that will do the work for you).
- A helpful guide is to ask yourself: “**If AI was another person, would this be right?**”
- Ethical AI use depends on **context**.

