

Ethics: Using AI Responsibly in Your Research

Introduction

AI can help streamline your research process, but needs to be used responsibly. There are guidelines on ethical use of AI ethically in research. Here are some of the key points.

First, always check to see what your local guidelines are. Your university, supervisor, instructor, program, funding agency, or journal may have their own guidelines for use of AI in research. It's important to look for these and follow them if they exist.

Responsibility

AI research guidelines agree that as the researcher you are fully responsible for your process and your final written results. This includes any content created by AI or processes supported by AI tools.

It's generally ok to use AI to help, but not to replace what you would normally do. You need to make a substantial contribution to all parts of the research process and final written result.

You also need to be sure everything you get from an AI tool is accurate and unbiased. For example, verify citations and other AI-generated information for accuracy by using other tools, such as scholarly databases. See the [Library's Tutorials page](#) for how to use scholarly databases, or [ask your librarian](#).

You also need to read sources, so you can check the accuracy of summaries.

For more details about how to evaluate AI tools, see the Evaluation section of this module.

Transparency

Transparency involves being up front about the fact that you used AI and how you used it.

If you use output from an AI tool in your work, cite it. See the [Library's page on Citing AI](#).

If you use AI in your process, disclose what you used and how you used it. Often this is done in the methods section (or equivalent). Different institutions, funding agencies, publishers and journals may have their own specific guidelines for when and how to disclose AI use. Examples of guidelines:

- [Wilfrid Laurier University: Generative AI Guidelines](#)
- [Wiley: Using AI in Your Research](#) (journal publisher)
- [University of Calgary: Transparency and Attribution](#) (general guidelines)

Lack of transparency about AI use in research is serious. Failure to cite and acknowledge or disclose may be considered plagiarism or research misconduct.

Privacy and Intellectual Property

Many AI tools are unclear about how they use information you provide or upload. Make sure you respect privacy and intellectual property laws and guidelines.

Look for privacy information, for example in the About section of the tool. If you can't find anything, be wary. Assume your data is not private and will be used for training or other purposes.

Respect laws:

- Don't upload personal or sensitive information without consent.
- Don't upload other people's work without their permission.
- Don't upload copyrighted material, such as published journal articles.

Best practices include:

- Share as little as possible to get the result you need.
- Follow institutional privacy and confidentiality frameworks
- Make sure you don't share personal, restricted or confidential information with an AI tool

Summary

- **Responsibility:** If you use AI, it is up to you to make sure output is appropriate, accurate and unbiased. Use AI to assist, not to replace your own thought and effort.
- **Transparency:** Cite any AI-generated output, and disclose your use of AI in the research process. Use the appropriate guidelines for your institution, funding agency, or publisher.
- **Privacy:** Most AI tools make no claims to data privacy. Don't upload or share personal or sensitive information, other people's work, or copyrighted material.

More Information

- [Living guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research](#) (European Union)
- [Embracing AI with integrity: A practical guide for researchers](#) (UK Research Integrity Office)

Questions?

As us at library.wlu.ca/help/askus