

Brainstorming: Examples and Tips

Here are some examples of how you might use a GenAI chatbot in brainstorming:

- Start with a broad prompt
 - Describe your topic and ask the AI to suggest possible research directions or approaches.
 - *Example: “I’m studying the impact of green infrastructure on urban heat islands in mid-sized Canadian cities. What are some possible research directions or approaches I could take?”*

Open [Copilot](#) (Laurier's secure instance) in another window and try your own prompts!

- Ask for different types of approaches
 - Prompt the AI to suggest approaches by method, theory, or population.
 - *Example: “What methodological approaches could I use to study urban heat islands (e.g., GIS analysis, case studies, surveys)?”*
- Identify gaps, tensions, or debates
 - Ask the AI to highlight areas of disagreement or under researched questions.
 - *Example: “What are current debates or unresolved questions about the effectiveness of green infrastructure in reducing urban heat islands?”*
- Generate and compare multiple lists
 - Run variations of your prompt to explore different research directions.
 - *Example: “List research directions focused on policy outcomes” vs. “List research directions focused on community impacts.”*
- Keep an idea log
 - Save useful research directions along with the prompt and tool used to track how your project develops.
 - *Example: Keep notes on which prompts led to viable directions like comparing municipal policies across cities.*
- Evaluate and refine your options

- Review the suggested directions and select those that are feasible, relevant, and supported by scholarly literature.
 - *Example: Narrow from “evaluate all green infrastructure types” to “analyze cooling effects of green roofs in two comparable cities.”*

More Brainstorming Tips:

- Remember to acknowledge conceptual contributions (e.g., “Generated initial topic ideas using Copilot”).
- Always ask the AI to provide sources for claims, e.g. in identifying gaps or under researched questions, ask for scholarly sources to verify the claims made.
- Use brainstorming outputs as starting points, not final claims; verify feasibility and accuracy before adopting ideas.
- Avoid letting AI constrain your creativity; critique and refine the suggestions to ensure originality.
- Note any biases in AI suggestions and document how they were mitigated.
 - Compare AI-generated ideas with established literature to spot when the AI overemphasizes certain theories, regions, or authors—note where the imbalance appears.
 - Identify missing perspectives (e.g., non-Western authors, alternative methodologies, marginalized communities) and record these gaps in research notes.
 - Ask the AI explicitly for counterexamples or alternative viewpoints (“What perspectives might be missing from this list?”) and document its responses and limitations.
 - Cross-check AI suggestions with discipline-specific databases (e.g. JSTOR, APA PsycInfo, or Web of Science) to see whether the suggestions align with actual patterns in the field.
 - Keep a brief reflection note (e.g., in a research notebook or methodology section) describing what biases you observed and how you corrected for them.