

AI guidelines for teachers

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Artificial intelligence

These practical guidelines offer principles to help you make responsible choices when using AI in your teaching.



Human first

AI systems sometimes have limited information about some areas and cultures. A human-centred approach prioritises the needs and well-being of all involved, so that digital solutions enhance the learning experience without compromising safety, privacy, ethics or human agency.



Safety

Consider safeguarding guidance. Ensuring safe use of AI technologies in and out of your classroom prevents exposure to inappropriate content and protects participants' and learners' data, rights and well-being.



Privacy and data rights

Do not input personal or identifiable data, photos, etc. into an AI tool. You must protect intellectual property and personal or sensitive data. There is risk of use as training data by the AI tool, copyright infringement and misuse by third parties such as identity theft.



Transparency

Be open when you use AI to help you. Remember, the outputs from generative AI are based on user prompts. Share and learn from others' prompts. If prompts are incorrect or non-inclusive, it can result in content that harms or misrepresents people.



Ethics and bias

Remember that AI tools can produce unreliable, biased content or otherwise unacceptable content. Ensure you are not using material that is incorrect or that neglects or misrepresents groups within our society. Consider accessibility. Test an AI tool to check if it works equally well with everyone and does not disadvantage anyone.



Accountability and responsibility

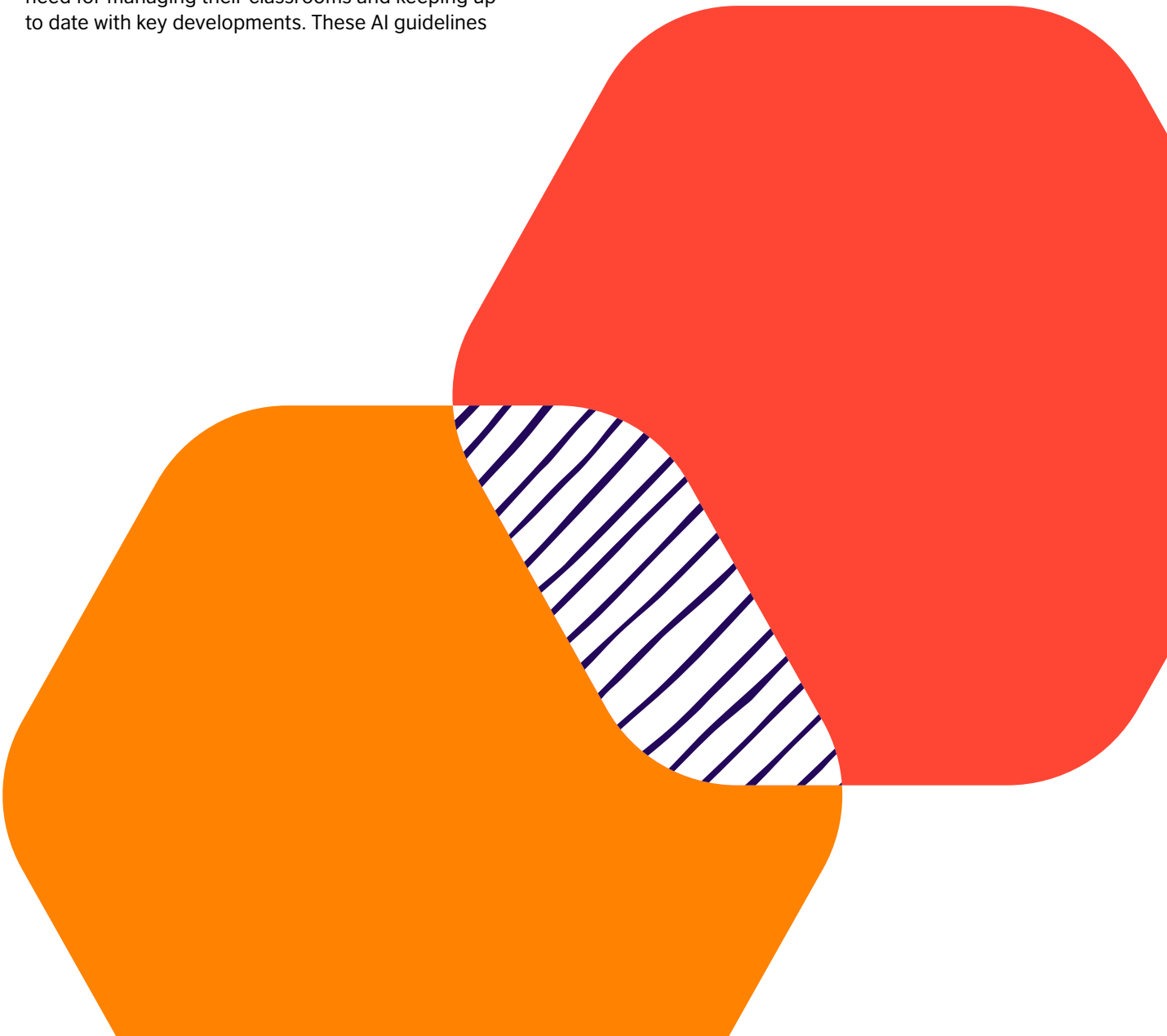
Involve guardians and learners in making decisions about AI use. We are all accountable for our own decisions on when, why and how we use AI. By ensuring responsible use of AI, you protect your professional credibility.

Introduction

The British Council report on [Artificial intelligence \(AI\) and English language teaching](#) found that teachers use AI-powered tools for many purposes, including creating materials, helping learners practise English and assessing progress. However, while AI is greatly impacting English language teaching, teachers reported mixed feelings about how AI affects learning. Many teachers felt they had not had enough training or support on integrating AI into their work effectively and safely. These AI guidelines for teachers are part of a series of steps designed to address that gap.

The British Council is committed to supporting teachers with the skills, tools and resources they need for managing their classrooms and keeping up to date with key developments. These AI guidelines

offer principles to help teachers make responsible choices when using AI in teaching or for continuing professional development. While primarily designed for English language teachers, these guidelines may also be useful for other subject teachers in English-medium education. We hope the guidelines are a valuable resource for teachers, empowering them to take an informed, ethical and context-specific approach to integrating AI into their teaching.



AI principles

These six principles should be respected when we use AI.

Human first

Privacy and data rights

Ethics and bias

Safety

Transparency

Accountability and responsibility





Human first

A human-centred approach focuses on the needs and well-being of everyone. It makes sure that digital tools improve learning while keeping safety, privacy, ethics and human control in mind.

1. **Check if the outputs of AI tools are accurate, inclusive and appropriate.** Where possible, help others, like leaders, guardians and learners, understand how to check AI results too.
2. **Make decisions based on your specific context,** because AI systems might have limited information about certain places and cultures.
3. **Discuss and share** your questions, learning and experiences with colleagues to improve understanding and knowledge of AI-powered tools. Check this professional development pathway on [AI in language teaching](#) for resources that help teachers develop AI literacy.
4. **Where AI is used in assessment, marking and feedback,** ensure that this is combined with ethical human oversight and transparency. See the Appendix for a [checklist on using AI for assessment, marking and feedback](#).



Privacy and data rights

You must protect learners' and your own personal or sensitive data. There is a risk of your inputs being used to train AI tools, and of misuse of your data or fraud. You must also be mindful not to break copyright rules.

1. **Always remove all personal information** like names, email addresses, phone numbers, addresses, student IDs, workplaces and photos. Make sure no one (learners, teachers, parents/guardians) can be identified.
2. **Check the platform copyright statement and terms of use.** If using AI-generated content, check if it is authentic, who owns it and if you have the [right to share it](#).
3. **When choosing an AI tool, think about how it uses and stores data.** Where possible, find the setting that means the AI tool will not use your data for training. See the Appendix for a checklist on [AI safety](#).



Ethics and bias

Remember that AI tools can produce unreliable, biased or unsuitable content. Make sure you do not use material that is incorrect, harmful or offensive, or that discriminates against any social groups.

1. **Check AI content for fairness.** Look at the AI-generated content to see if it shows equal respect to all individuals and communities. Make sure it does not show any bias, stereotypes or discrimination. If you notice any unfairness, try to address it or avoid using that content.
2. **Always tell learners how you will use the AI tool and get their permission.** Whether marking homework, summarising learners' opinions or asking others to use an AI tool (like a chatbot), explain that they are not talking to a human, share the risks and provide guidance for protecting their personal information.
3. **Think about the climate impact of using AI.** Try to reduce the number of prompts and searches. As a rule of thumb, an AI query typically uses around five to ten times the energy of a standard web search. Check whether the AI tool is made by a company that is working to reduce environmental impacts. See the Appendix for a checklist on [reducing the environmental impact of AI](#).
4. **Consider accessibility for learners** with disabilities or additional needs. Check whether the interaction modes are suitable for your learners, consider the target age group and check if it works with any assistive technologies your learners use.



Safety

Using AI-powered tools responsibly and safely prevents exposure to inappropriate content and protects your and your learners' data, rights and well-being.

1. **Follow your workplace's rules for cybersecurity and safeguarding.** This is very important for everyone's security and well-being.
2. **Model safe and good practice** if using an AI tool in class or on social media so that others learn from you.
3. **Make sure everyone knows how to report safeguarding concerns,** including issues that happen in interactions with an AI system.



Transparency

Be open and honest when you use AI to help you. Remember, the outputs from generative AI are based on user prompts. If prompts are incorrect or non-inclusive, it can result in content that harms or misrepresents people.

1. **Make it clear when you use AI** to help with work. Mention the AI tool used and the specific version or model in a reference. Purdue University's Online Writing Lab provides an overview of [how to cite AI-generated content](#). For example:
 - for a lesson plan outline: Lesson plan outline started by Copilot for John Smith (31 October 2024)
 - for translating a phrase: Translation from English to Spanish by ChatGPT (31 October 2024)
 - for AI-generated material: Shutterstock AI (2023). Photo of robot teacher [Digital art]. Available at: <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-generated/photo-robot-teacher-28705> (Accessed 31 March 2024).
2. **Include the prompt you used in your reference.** The prompt is the text or question you give to the AI tool when asking it to do something.
3. **Ask the AI tool for the steps** it took to create the output.
4. **Ask learners to state when they use AI-powered tools** in their homework or assignments. Include this in a class contract and instructions.



Accountability and responsibility

We are all answerable for when, why and how we use AI. By using AI-powered tools in a responsible way, we maintain our learners' trust in us.

1. **Follow these guidelines and school policies.** We need to respect safety, privacy and fairness and be clear about how we use AI.
2. **Involve guardians and learners in making decisions** about using and monitoring AI-powered tools.
3. **Make instructions and information available** in different formats, such as posters or checklists, so that everyone can access them easily.

Appendix

Checklist for teachers: using AI for assessment, marking and feedback

1. Purpose and transparency

- Inform learners clearly that AI is being used and explain how it contributes to their assessment.
- Get written consent from your learners before inputting their work into an AI tool. Students own the intellectual property (IP) rights to their work. Sharing it with unapproved AI tools may breach copyright laws.
- Make sure AI is an aid, not a replacement for professional judgement.
- Avoid using AI for formal grading without human verification. Never use AI-generated marks alone to determine a learner's grade or academic standing.
- Disclose any AI-assisted grading in official records or reports.

2. Data privacy, security and copyright

- Do not upload learner-identifiable data (names, emails, IDs, etc.) unless the platform complies with local or international standards, e.g. GDPR, FERPA.
- Use school-approved AI tools with proper data protection and privacy guarantees.
- Avoid using public AI tools on the internet or those that don't have easy-to-understand privacy settings for learner submissions.
- To protect students' IP rights, only upload parts of student work – not the whole text.
- Delete learner work from systems after AI use unless otherwise required by your school policy.

3. Accuracy and bias

- Check AI feedback or marks manually before sharing with learners.
- Cross-check AI's evaluations against marking rubrics and criteria.

- Be alert for bias, for example the AI may favour certain writing styles, dialects or vocabulary.
- Run sample tests with diverse learner work to identify inconsistencies or bias patterns.

4. Alignment with assessment criteria

- Feed the AI the exact marking rubric or learning outcomes to guide its evaluation.
- Ensure feedback references clear, objective criteria, not just general quality judgements.
- Avoid only focusing on grammar feedback, and ensure content, reasoning and creativity are also valued.
- Check that AI feedback supports learning goals, encourages reflection and is balanced, e.g. not overly positive or negative.

5. Feedback quality and usefulness

- Edit or adapt AI-generated feedback to make it personal, actionable and supportive.
- Highlight strengths as well as areas for improvement (AI often over-focuses on errors or positive feedback).
- Encourage learners to reflect on AI feedback rather than just accept it passively.
- Provide opportunities for dialogue. Learners should be able to question or clarify AI-based feedback.

6. Record-keeping and accountability

- Document AI involvement, e.g. AI-generated draft feedback before and after editing by the teacher.
- Keep records of prompts, rubrics and outputs for transparency and moderation.
- Review institutional policies regularly as AI tools and regulations evolve.

Checklist for teachers: AI safety

1. Data privacy and security

- Before using a GenAI tool, read the privacy policy to confirm what data is collected and how it's used.
- Check whether the tool asks for personal information (names, emails, photos, etc.) and whether consent is optional.
- Verify compliance with GDPR, COPPA or local data laws.
- Ensure the tool doesn't sell or share data for advertising or analytics.
- Where possible, choose tools that allow teacher-managed or anonymous learner access.

2. Content safety

- Test the tool for inappropriate, biased or violent language/images.
- Confirm that the platform has built-in filters to block harmful or explicit content.
- Look for preview features that allow you to view or approve content before learners see it.

3. Bias, fairness and representation

- Evaluate images or text outputs for stereotypes or lack of diversity.
- Try diverse names, accents or cultural examples to see whether the AI responds fairly and respectfully.
- Ensure the AI doesn't by default promote specific political, religious or social views.

4. Transparency and control

- Check the settings to ensure learners can control their privacy, limit the use of the AI input for training and delete the interaction history.
- Prefer tools that explain how results are generated, e.g. AI summary tools that cite sources.
- Check if you can limit features, control learner access or disable chat or upload functions.
- Ensure you can delete or stop an AI interaction if something inappropriate happens.

- Evaluate ownership rights and limitations of AI outputs.

5. Access and inclusion

- Check accessibility for learners with disabilities (screen readers, captions, etc.).
- Check if there's support for learners' language levels or local languages.
- Avoid tools that might pressure learners to pay for upgrades or expose them to advertising.

6. Accountability and support

- The company should have a visible contact page or support email.
- Check that the tool is maintained and updated regularly.
- Make sure it's on your institution's approved software list (if applicable).
- Have a classroom protocol for reporting or addressing inappropriate AI outputs or misuse.

Testing tips

Before classroom use, test the tool yourself.

- Use it with fictional data (e.g. a made-up learner name).
- Try a few unusual or sensitive prompts to see how it responds.
- Screenshot or record any unexpected outputs for future reference or discussion.

Checklist for teachers: reducing the environmental impact of AI

1. Choose energy-efficient tools

- Select more environmentally friendly AI tools, for example use platforms that advertise 'green AI' certification or sustainability statements.
- When possible, choose simpler AI tools, like basic chatbots or image generators, rather than advanced versions with 'Plus' or 'Premier' in the title.
- Prioritise tools that run locally as downloadable software rather than cloud-based tools, when available.

2. Minimise unnecessary AI use

- Only use AI when it adds real value, e.g. to improve learning or automate repetitive work.
- Avoid over-reliance on AI for simple tasks that could be done with existing tools.
- Set time limits on AI-assisted tasks.
- Discourage repeated or 'exploratory' prompting without purpose in the classroom.

3. Reduce data processing and storage

- Delete unnecessary data and outputs instead of storing large volumes of files in the history.

4. Promote responsible learning

- Educate learners about AI's environmental impact as part of digital literacy.
- Encourage 'green prompting' by using precise and targeted prompts to reduce energy consumption.

Further resources

1. The British Council's AI activity and [resource pack](#) for English language teachers helps integrate AI-based activities into teaching and continuing professional development.
2. The British Council's free course [Integrating digital technologies](#) helps teachers learn how to use digital tools, including AI, to find, evaluate and create digital content and resources that foster inclusion and support learners' collaboration, information literacy and problem-solving skills. (TeachingEnglish courses run according to a schedule. Check course dates on the course webpage).
3. The European Commission has published detailed [ethical guidelines](#) on AI and data usage in teaching and learning.
4. Purdue University's Online Writing Lab provides an overview of [how to cite AI-generated content](#).
5. The British Council report on [Artificial intelligence \(AI\) and English language teaching](#) provides an evidence-based overview of how AI is being used in English language teaching and learning globally, and of the key opportunities and risks.

About the British Council

The British Council is the UK's international culture and education organisation. We support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.

We work with governments and our partners in the education, English language and cultural sectors to make a bigger difference,

creating benefit for millions of people all over the world. At the heart of these relationships is trust that is built over time and nurtured through shared experiences.

We work with people in over 200 countries and territories. In 2024–25 we reached 600 million people.