Using AI Tools (including ChatGPT) at Northumbria University – Initial Use Cases

This guide offers several different use cases for working with AI tools and ChatGPT within your studies. It can be used as an assistive tool to help you create a structure for your essay, simplify information from your learning materials, offer an initial review of your work to then built upon and more…

The material within this guidance is simply a starting point for you to consider as to how best to utilise this amazing new technology.

<u>However, please be aware</u> ChatGPT can be known to "hallucinate" whereby it simply makes up elements of its narrative, including references. As such, you should always look to 'check**' the source of origin of information from ChatGPT.**

Should you have any concerns surrounding the use of ChatGPT in your studies, why not visit the Technology Enhanced Learning desk in the IT Place, within Student Central – a member of the team will be glad to offer you support and guidance. You can also utilise the [Skills Development Drop-ins](#) should you wish to speak to your tutor or visit the Library support staff.

So let's take a look at how you can utilise this technology in your studies…

Simplify a topic.

If you're exploring a new subject and you're finding the explanation provided doesn't make sense, you can ask ChatGPT to explain it to you in a different way. Maybe the way the information has been displayed to you could be changed or you would prefer your information to be told like a story. You can ask ChatGPT to display information in many ways.

It could be that you're wanting an activity to help you understand something in greater detail also.

Why not ask ChatGPT to explain the concept to you?

For example, you could ask ChatGPT:

*"**Provide a simplified explanation** of [topic x]"*

Real example:

"Provide a simplified explanation of a paternalistic approach to public health"

> XI | Provide a simplified explanation of a paternalistic approach to public health
>
> 🟢 A paternalistic approach to public health refers to a philosophy or strategy that prioritizes the protection and well-being of individuals or populations, even if it means limiting their individual freedoms and autonomy. In this approach, public health authorities or governments take on the role of "paternal figures" who make decisions on behalf of the people they serve, with the aim of promoting the overall health and well-being of the community.

Another real example:

"Break down quantum mechanics to me with bullet points"

> XI | Break down quantum mechanics to me with bullet points
>
> 🟢 Sure, here's a brief summary of quantum mechanics in bullet points:
>
> - Quantum mechanics is a branch of physics that describes the behavior of matter and energy at the smallest scales, such as atoms and subatomic particles.
> - The basic unit of quantum mechanics is the quantum, which is the smallest amount of energy that can be transferred between particles.
> - Quantum mechanics describes particles as waves and can predict the probabilities of finding particles in certain locations.
> - The uncertainty principle states that the position and momentum of a particle cannot both be precisely known at the same time.

One final real example:

"Give me an activity to help me understand the fall of the soviet union"

> XI | Give me an activity to help me understand the fall of the soviet union
>
> 🟢 One activity that can help you understand the fall of the Soviet Union is to research and analyze primary sources related to the period leading up to the collapse. Here are the steps you can follow:
>
> 1. Identify key events and figures that played a role in the fall of the Soviet Union. These may include individuals such as Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin, and Ronald Reagan, as well as events such as the Chernobyl disaster and the Soviet-Afghan War.
> 2. Find primary sources that provide insight into these events and figures. These may include speeches, government documents, news articles, and personal accounts.
> 3. Read and analyze the primary sources, looking for themes and patterns that help explain the fall of the Soviet Union. Some questions to consider may include: What were the key factors that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union? How did political and economic reforms impact the stability of the Soviet system? How did international relations, such as the arms race with the United States, impact the Soviet Union?

Create a structure for a report/essay.

You may be unsure how to structure a report or an essay… ChatGPT can give you a basic structure that you can use to build on. A framework where you can insert the relevant materials and get advice on what to include in your report or essay.

This is not to ask ChatGPT to write your essay for you, rather, to give you a process or a pathway so that you can organise yourself and your time for tackling your assignment.

In this case you could ask ChatGPT:

*"**Please help me create a structure for an essay** on [topic x]"*

Let's take a look at a real example:

"Please help me create a structure for an essay on the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on small businesses in the UK"

> **XI**   Please help me create a structure for a essay on the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on small businesses in the UK
>
> ⬡   Certainly! Here's a structure you could use for your essay on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on small businesses in the UK:
>
> I. Introduction (approx. 400 words)
>
> - Start with a brief overview of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on society.
> - Provide context for the topic by discussing the importance of small businesses in the UK economy.
> - Clearly state your thesis or main argument.
> - Preview the main points you'll be making in the essay.

Have ChatGPT give you an initial review of your work.

If you are wanting to check if you could make any amendments or expand on a piece of assessment you are working on, ChatGPT can provide an initial review of your work to give you some insights in to whether you need to add, remove or expand on certain points.

To do this, simply as ChatGPT, "Can you do an **initial review** of this piece of work for me:" and paste the work thereafter.
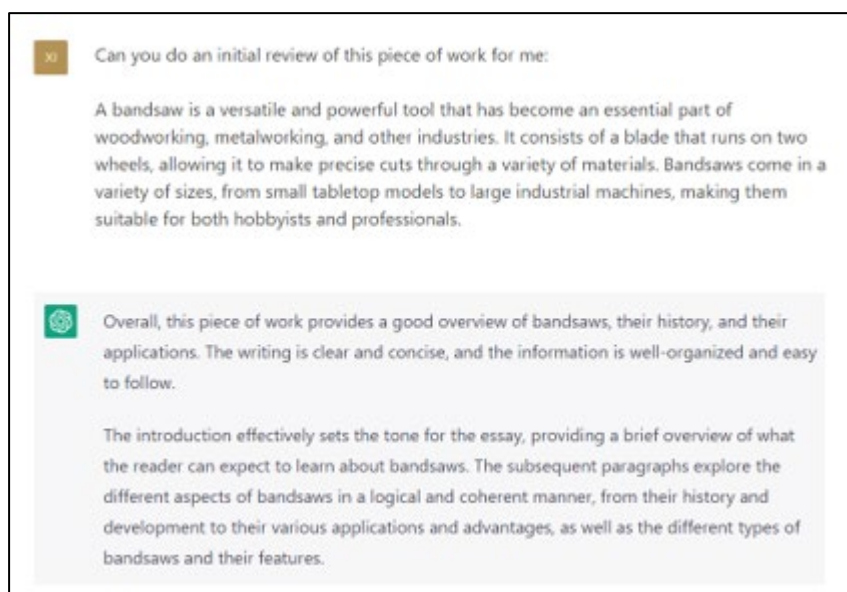
A few points to note:

1. **Do not submit any work which is identifiable** – i.e. you cannot be identified, nor can anyone else be identified.
2. **Do not submit any sensitive pieces of work**, particularly do not include any confidential pieces of work!
3. **Do not submit any work which contains any personal data.**
4. **Do not submit your entire assessment.**
5. **Do not ask ChatGPT to rewrite your work for you, ensure you're only using it for advice and guidance.**

Remember it's important for you to develop your own academic abilities whilst studying at University. There are many tools which can help you, ChatGPT is only one. Please considering visiting the Skills Plus pages on Academic Writing to help further develop your academic skills.

In the example below we submitted a 300-word introduction for an essay about Bandsaws and asked:

"Can you do an initial review of this piece of work for me:" and pasted in our first part of the essay.

It is important to note that ChatGPT is no true subsitute for your tutors or the library services guidance. If you are able to, we advise booking some time with either your tutor or a library specialist to review your work.

Provide an initial starting point to a question.

Whilst using ChatGPT to create entire essays will incur penalties under current academic regulations, you can have it provide you with an initial starting point to a question, which may help you formulate your response to a particular essay question, much like how you would Google an initial question.
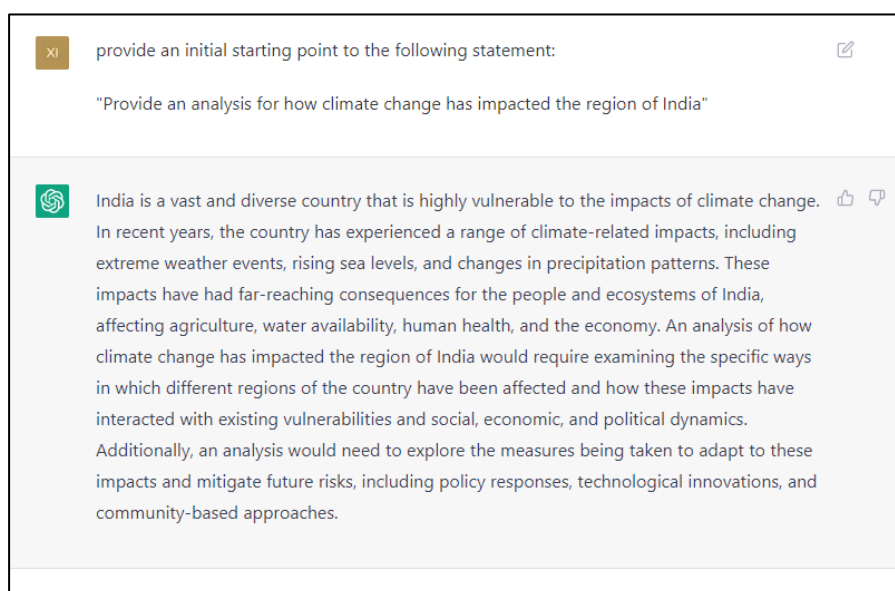
For example, you may have been asked the question:

"Provide an analysis for how climate change has impacted the region of India."

In this instance we asked ChatGPT the following:

"Create an initial starting point to the following statement:

Provide an analysis for how climate change has impacted the region of India"

You can then utilise the response to continue your research utilising a range of sources as you would have previously done through Google, the library and via your module's reading list.

When using ChatGPT and AI Tools for proofing or providing an initial starting point, it is important to remember to only use it for guidance and advice.

Do you have any other ideas as to how best to use ChatGPT in your studies? Well why not get in touch with us at the TEL Drop In Service at the IT Place – we'd love to hear from you and to add your thoughts to our ever growing body of knowledge on this technology!