MLA Citations for Content Generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

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Note: Guidance on how to cite the academic use of AI tools is changing rapidly. Normandale librarians will update this document as needed. The latest version will be available at the Library and on the Library website at https://www.normandale.edu/library/ai-mla. Have questions? Ask a Normandale librarian for help.

Work Generated by Artificial Intelligence Is Not the Same as Other Sources

AI-generated content is not like other sources you might cite. ChatGPT, DALL-E, and similar AI tools generate text, images, and other outputs based on the common patterns they learned from millions of *other sources* — the documents, images, or other data the AI tools trained on. It is usually impossible to trace AI-generated content back to the training sources it is based on or to know how the AI tool itself works. The work generated by AI tools replicates, and often amplifies, the biases that exist in the training sources. These issues, and other ethical implications of AI tools, are beyond the scope of this document and deserve consideration on their own. Want to chat about all this? Ask a librarian!

Warning! Use Work Generated by Artificial Intelligence Carefully and Transparently

1. **Check with your instructor before using AI tools** like ChatGPT, DALL-E, Copilot, etc., in any assignment or in assignment preparation. Many instructors do not allow any AI use or have specific rules to follow. Also check before using any generative AI features built into other apps.

2. **Check the facts!** Text AI tools like ChatGPT write responses without concern for factual accuracy. These tools do not disclose the origin of the "information" they provide and sometimes *completely make up* information or fake source citations. Use non-AI sources to verify accuracy. We recommend you use — and cite — those non-AI sources instead!

3. **Declare your use of AI tools with an AI Use Disclosure** (or other statement as directed by your instructor) that describes which tool you used and how you used it. Include an AI Use Disclosure even if you only used AI tools for brainstorming or other preparation for an assignment.

4. **Cite the specific AI-generated content you use or take ideas from** (text, images, videos, audio, code, etc.). We recommend including both in-text citations and full citations in your Works Cited.

AI Use Disclosure Statement

Unless otherwise directed by your instructor, we recommend you include an AI Use Disclosure statement in your assignment. A good place to put the statement is after the body of your essay and before the Works Cited. Include in your statement the AI tools you used and 1-3 sentences about how you used them. We recommend you include a statement any time you cite AI-generated content *and* any time you use AI tools as part of your assignment process (even if you are not citing AI-generated content directly).

Example:

AI Use Disclosure

I used ChatGPT to help me find a television commercial that fits the goals of this assignment. It gave me the example of the Nike "Dream Big" commercial and explained how some of the technical elements relate to polysemy of commodities. I then used my class notes to apply these elements to the commercial.

MLA Style for Citing AI-Generated Content

This is a summary of the Modern Language Association's (MLA) current [recommendation for citing AI-generated content](#).

Acknowledge All Uses of the Tool and Cite Any Quote or Paraphrase

If you use an AI tool, you should explain how you used the tool—to provide information, summarize text, rewrite text, translate, define words, explain ideas, create an image, etc.—and provide your prompt. You can provide this information either in the body of your paper or in a note such as an AI Use Disclosure Statement (see above). Follow the preferences of your instructor.

For example, if you typed *Give me step-by-step instructions on how to flush an electric water heater* into ChatGPT and then used the response as a source of information, you need to state that somewhere in your work.

MLA recommends that you provide a citation when you paraphrase, quote, or incorporate into your own work any content (text, image, data, or anything else) that was created by an AI tool. You will need a brief in-text citation in the body of your paper and a complete citation in the Works Cited section.

General Format for Works Cited

In an MLA citation for AI-generated content, there is no author, since AI tools cannot be accountable as authors. Instead, start the citation with a brief description of what the AI tool generated. For ChatGPT, you only need one citation for each "chat." With some exceptions (see following sections), this is the citation format for most AI-generated content:

Brief description of work done by AI Tool. *Name of AI Tool*, Version if known, Name of Company, date the

content was generated, URL link address to general site of AI tool or to specific content if

available.

Example:

Instructions for flushing a water heater. *ChatGPT*, OpenAI, 18 Dec. 2023, [chat.openai.com/share/1483a831-2726-4d47-91d6-924a7b8a1c72](#).

About the version: Different AI tools may identify versions differently. Look for a version date (e.g., March 14 version), a version name, or a version number (e.g., Version 3.3). Many AI tools do not show version dates. If there is no version information provided, skip this part of the citation. Note: MLA wants DALL-E's model number to be listed as a version. For example, MLA wants DALL-E 3 cited as DALL-E, version 3.

About the URL: If the web address of the AI-generated content is publicly available to view *without* having an account or logging in, provide that URL. If you must log in to see the content, provide the main web address for the tool itself, such as copilot.microsoft.com.

Citing AI-Generated Creative Works with Titles

If you use the AI tool to generate a creative text work that has a title, like a poem or story, include the title of the work in quotation marks followed by a short description of the work.

Example:

"Rituals of Cleansing" poem in the style of E. E. Cummings about how to flush a water heater. *ChatGPT*, OpenAI, 2

Jan. 2024, chat.openai.com/share/9dab9425-e1a5-4497-958b-ce7e2161b3a2.

Citing AI-Generated Images

If you want to include an AI-generated image in your paper, include it as a numbered figure—abbreviated *Fig.*—with a caption. Include enough information in the caption so that the reader understands the image and can easily find the full citation in the Works Cited list. For example, MLA recommends you include the prompt in quotation marks followed by the word *prompt*, the AI tool, version (if known), and date generated in the caption.

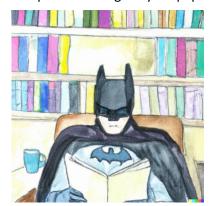Example of an image in your paper with a caption:

Fig. 1. "A watercolor painting of Batman reading a book in a library" prompt, *DALL-E*, version 2, 21 Aug. 2023.

The entry on the Works Cited page:

"A watercolor painting of Batman reading a book in a library" prompt. *DALL-E*, version 2, OpenAI, 21 Aug. 2023,

labs.openai.com/s/D4u19kmQHkzTIucl9C1fW6Gf.

General Format for In-Text Citations

When you summarize, take ideas from, or quote directly from AI-generated content, you need to provide an in-text citation in your work. The purpose of in-text citations is to point your reader to the corresponding full citation in your Works Cited list. You only need to include enough information in the in-text citation for your reader can easily identify which source in the Works Cited you are referring to.

An in-text citation inside parentheses uses an abbreviated portion of the first element of the full citation that appears in the Works Cited page. When that first element is a title (or, in this case, a description of work done by an AI tool or an exact prompt given to an AI tool), you shorten the title to the first noun or noun phrase. Place the shortened title, description, or prompt in parentheses at the end of the sentence. If the words appear within quotation marks in the Works Cited citation, put them in quotation marks inside the parentheses.

How to Shorten a Title, Description, or Prompt for a Parenthetical In-Text Citation

Include only the first noun or noun phrase in an in-text citation. This means to include the first noun and any adjectives that come before it in the title, description, or prompt. Do not include any initial article (*a*, *an*, or *the*) that starts the title, description, or prompt. It is important that an in-text citation contains enough information to unambiguously lead the reader to the correct Works Cited entry.

Examples:

Entry in Works Cited	Parenthetical In-Text Citation
First noun ↳ Instructions for flushing a water heater. *ChatGPT*, OpenAI, 18 Dec. 2023, chat.openai.com/share/1483a831-2726-4d47-91d6-924a7b8a1c72.	(Instructions) Example sentence: The water heater directions ChatGPT produced included opening the drain valve (Instructions).
First noun ↳ "Rituals of Cleansing" poem in the style of E. E. Cummings about how to flush a water heater. *ChatGPT*, OpenAI, 2 Jan. 2024, chat.openai.com/share/9dab9425-e1a5-4497-958b-ce7e2161b3a2.	("Rituals") Example sentence: The poem ChatGPT generated used Cummings's unusual word choice and punctuation ("Rituals").
Preceding adjective(s) First noun ↓ ↓ "A watercolor painting of Batman reading a book in a library" prompt. *DALL-E*, version 2, OpenAI, 21 Aug. 2023, labs.openai.com/s/D4u19kmQHkzTIucl9C1fW6Gf.	("watercolor painting") Example sentence: DALL-E produced a digital imitation of a watercolor painting of the superhero ("watercolor painting").

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