



MSU Extension Guidance for Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

This document serves as a resource to ensure ethical AI use while maintaining accuracy, transparency, and data compliance with MSU policies and best practices. This document will be updated as additional AI resources and guidance are learned.

For the purposes of this document, AI output is defined as anything that an AI tool generates. This may include response to a prompt or request, the result of an automation, or a specific edit made using an AI tool.

Overview of Expectations when Using Artificial Intelligence:

- Be familiar with the MSU [Guidelines for the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence \(Generative AI\) Tools](#) including understanding MSU's [acceptable use](#) and [institutional data](#) policies.
- **The employee is responsible for and can be held accountable to decisions made based on AI output, AI information used and/or presented in their work, employment application materials, or similar.**
- Ensure data privacy and security
 - Do NOT import or share with AI any sensitive, confidential, or personally identifiable information such as personal details, participant info (e.g. name, contact information), or proprietary research. If you want to use AI to analyze data sets, personally identifiable information must be removed before importing.
 - Generative AI can safely process publicly available and non-sensitive data.
 - If planning to use AI for data analysis on projects involving research with human subjects, include the planned use in your IRB application.
 - As a professional courtesy, the use of AI note taking or transcription apps during meetings should be disclosed. Be aware that all AI output of this nature is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- Proofread and verify all output. If you are unable to check the accuracy of the output, it is not recommended that you use AI.
 - All meeting notes, output, and transcripts generated by AI must be reviewed for accuracy prior to any distribution.
 - Research key points to ensure accuracy – check names, title, quotations, numbers, statistics, events, etc.



- Utilize evidence or research-based sites, sources, or tools, and subject matter experts to verify information.
- Be aware that bias exists in AI generated content, consider how it could be showing up in the AI output you generate. Anything that reads as a statement of fact, especially as related to groups of people, should be reviewed and evaluated for bias.
- If an AI tool consistently generates biased outputs, do not use the output, and use the AI tool with caution.
- AI software applications which are not MSU approved, must be reviewed and approved by MSU IT prior to downloading or creating accounts. Even if approved, the individual MSU staff member is responsible for knowing how to effectively use and manage the tool in a secure way.
- Cite AI when what was produced was significantly derived from AI. Use the style guide of your publisher for citations and observe any publication policies related to AI.
- Certain AI tools only cause minor changes to an output or can be replicated by a non-generative AI tool. An example would be an image background remover in a tool such as Adobe Photoshop or Canva. In these cases, it is not necessary to publicly note when AI was used, however you may want to include AI in your output file name for future reference.
- Consult with Institute leadership and Michigan State University Information Technology (by submitting a ticket at ithelp.msu.edu) before creating any MSU Extension large language model, machine learning algorithm, neural network, CustomGPT, AI agent, or other artificial intelligence model utilizing MSU Extension data. General AI bots or tools should not be developed for external or outward facing use by the community.



MSU Extension Background and Tips for Using Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence is a developing technology that is increasingly integrated into many facets of our lives – work and personal – in ways we might not even recognize. As technology morphs, it is important to continually review ethical use and mitigation of bias.

This document serves as a resource to understand Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how to use it in your work at MSU Extension. The following guidelines provide a framework for integrating AI into research, writing, communications, content and image creation, evaluation, reporting, and decision-making within MSU Extension.

Compliance and Security

All MSU community members including staff, students, volunteers, and even participants in MSU Extension online courses must adhere to MSU’s [acceptable use](#) and [institutional data](#) policies.

- **MSU acceptable use policy** (appropriate use of data and tools; user responsibility; security).
- **MSU institutional data policy** (confidential data; public data; authorized release of data).

Below is information from the Technology at MSU Interim Guidance on Data Uses and Risks of Generative AI outlining how MSU suggests handling specific types of data. Additional Michigan State University guidance on data types can be found on the Artificial Intelligence Tools website.

Data Type	Description
Public data	Generative AI can safely process publicly available information, general academic concepts, and non-sensitive data. Use of public data must still comply with MSU’s policies and be considered relative to its ethical and reputational implications.
Confidential or private data	Do not enter confidential data , including, but not limited to, social security numbers, contact details, name/image/likeness, and any information covered by FERPA, HIPAA, or other regulations into any generative AI product.
Research data	Researchers must consider the nature and sensitivity of scholarly data before using generative AI to support research. Do not put data that is confidential, contains sensitive information, or is subject to specific legal or ethical requirements (e.g., human subjects’ data) into any generative AI without proper anonymization and evaluation of potential risks, as well as express written consent from any other necessary parties.



Intellectual property	As questions around intellectual property and the use of generative AI are unresolved, the MSU community must avoid inputting proprietary or confidential information into generative AI, including unpublished research findings, internal university data or documents, or any information protected by intellectual property rights without express written consent from all stakeholders.
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AI Tools

The guidance offered through this document focuses on AI software that is approved and/or supported by MSU IT Services. Please note that the list of approved software will change over time as new tools become available and are added to the list. If you are considering using an AI tool to support your MSU Extension work it is recommended that you use your MSU login for work related activities and create separate AI accounts for any personal use.

To view the most up-to-date information on MSU IT Services approved and/or support software visit the Tools at MSU’s [Artificial Intelligence Resources](#) page.

MSU Extension Artificial Intelligence (AI) Frequently Asked Questions and Examples

What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a technology that makes predictions by training algorithms through large language models (LLMs), small language models or other information available via the internet. It is not the same as a Google search or search function that returns links to information related to the search terms.

What is a large or small language model?

A Large Language Model (LLM) or Small Language Model (SLM) is a type of artificial intelligence (AI) designed to process and generate human-like text. It is trained on vast amounts of text data and can understand, generate, summarize, translate, and analyze language. Examples include: GPT-4, Microsoft Copilot and Google Gemini.

Am I required to use AI as a part of my job?

No, the use of AI is not required for staff to complete the requirements of their position.

When can I use AI in my position?



An employee interested in utilizing AI to supplement their work should be familiar with the MSU Extension Policy for Use of Artificial Intelligence, Guidelines | AI | Michigan State University including understanding MSU's [acceptable use](#) and [institutional data](#) policies. Employees must ensure data privacy and security.

AI can be used to brainstorm and generate ideas for various projects including newsletters, articles, emails, social media posts, grant applications, survey questions. AI can also be used to create draft images, graphics, generate alternative text for images, analyze publicly available and non-sensitive data and many more tasks associated with Extension work.

Employees are responsible for and can be held accountable to decisions made based on AI output, AI information used and/or presented in their work, employment application materials, or areas where AI was used.

When should I not use AI?

Some research activities should not utilize AI. Examples include the peer review process and publishing in scientific journals. Further guidance can be found at: Guidelines | AI | Michigan State University. <https://research.msu.edu/generative-ai/guidance>.

What are some examples of times I should verify outputs?

Always! All outputs should be reviewed and edited as necessary. If the output generated includes information that is not evidence or research based, it should be removed.

One specific example is qualitative coding of interview data when you are not familiar with the data, how to code data or using AI to singularly code qualitative data. When coding data best practices recommend using dual coders to avoid mistakes.

How do I know if my AI generated output is biased?

- Check if the AI reinforces stereotypes about race, gender, religion, or culture.
- Research key points to ensure accuracy – check names, title, quotations, number/ statistics, events, etc.
- Utilize evidence or research-based sites or tools, and subject matter experts to verify information.
- Ask the AI the same question in different ways and analyze whether it gives skewed or one-sided answers.

Can I use ChatGPT?

Staff may use the enterprise licensed version of ChatGPT by purchasing the software through the MSU Tech Store.

Can I use AI for translating materials into other languages?

Updated: May 2026



While AI translation tools (like Google Translate or AI platforms with translation features) are improving, they should not replace MSU Extension’s established translation process. It is best practice to first submit materials through the official MSU Extension Translation Request Process. If AI is used to support translation efforts, the resulting text must always be reviewed through a peer review process to ensure cultural and linguistic accuracy. AI translations can contain errors or lack cultural nuance, so human verification is essential.



MSU Extension Guidance for Citation of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI: Citation & Avoiding Plagiarism

According to the U.S. Copyright Office, machines or software cannot hold a copyright; it [must be the product of human creativity](#). Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) currently cannot be an author. However, you should not present Generative Artificial Intelligence writing as your own. AI should be used as a tool to support human creativity and not replace critical thinking and expertise. Additionally, tools to detect AI output exist and are evolving and to become more accurate, making detection of AI writing possible.

General Guidance: When AI Citation is Necessary

Cite AI when materials or assets were produced by or significantly derived from AI-generated outputs, exceeding prewriting, basic editing, or proofreading. The exception to this rule would be using AI for internal-use communications such as emails. Also cite when AI use is part of a study’s research methodology or analysis.

Citation Guidance: Academic Guidance

Check with the publishing policies of the style guide you are using (APA, CMOS, MLA, etc.) as well as with the publishing source, such as the journal in which you seek to publish. Generally, common themes across publication styles include always specifying which AI software you used, describing its purpose, including prompts used, and disclosing any AI-generated text.

Citation Guidance: Extension Articles

Extension articles are written using Associated Press (AP) Style, which does not yet have official guidance on citing AI-generated content. However, AP has advised journalists to treat AI-generated content with caution and disclose its use when relevant. Since AP encourages transparency, here’s a suggested way to reference ChatGPT in an article:

- Within the text: "According to ChatGPT, OpenAI’s artificial intelligence chatbot, ..."
- For attribution (if applicable): "The information was generated using ChatGPT, an AI model developed by OpenAI."

Citation Guidance: Nonacademic Use Guidance

Use the following guiding questions to determine if it is appropriate to cite AI:

1. Was something original created?
2. Were you merely modifying something you have already created?

When citation is generally not needed	When citation is recommended
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarizing your own work • Brainstorming to generate ideas that you curate and develop • Brainstorming specific examples • Generating drafts of multi-choice questions based on your own material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using AI-generated writing • Including AI-generated images • Analyzing data with AI • Demonstrating an AI tool



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rewriting your own text in a different style• Editing writing for style, grammar or spelling• Writing or rewriting an email or email response• Reorganizing information such as reformatting references into a specific format, alphabetize, group• Generating title ideas for a paper you wrote | |
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Citation Guidance: AI Generated Images

Different image generators have different use policies. Be sure to read, understand and comply with these policies.

Even if the tool allows you to use images generated for personal, commercial, or educational purposes, keep in mind that AI is creating a new image from images that it was trained on, and those could include copyrighted works.

ChatGPT and DALL-E, for example, allow you to use images generated for personal, commercial, or educational purposes. However, keep in mind that AI is creating a new image from images that it was trained on, and those could include copyrighted works.

Determining if an AI-generated image is too similar to a copyright-protected work can be challenging, so it is recommended to conduct an online image search to check for potential matches.

You also want to avoid trademarked logos or characters. For example, asking AI to generate an image of a Disney character may generate a unique image, but should not be used as it risks copyright infringement.

In general, when citing the creation of an image by AI, include the name of the AI tool, date, and the company used to generate the image and save the prompt used. While some guidelines may not explicitly require this information, it is recommended for transparency. Refer to the example below to see an AI image should be cited.

Example citation text for AI generated image:

ChatGPT v4.0. 12 December 2024



Example citation image for AI generated image:



ChatGPT v4.0. 12 December 2024 1

Additionally, the following MSU Extension resources and guidelines help educators understand the process of properly using citations, creating references, and finding quality resources.

- [Keeping it Legit: Properly Citing & Sourcing MSU Extension Materials](#)
- [Text Citations & References Checklist](#)
- [Author Checklist for MSU Extension Educational Materials](#)



Links & Reference Pages

Acceptable Use Policy for MSU Information Technology Resources: <https://tech.msu.edu/about/guidelines-policies/aup/>

Approved Software List: <https://upl.msu.edu/procurement/policies-procedures/it-review/approved-software/index.html>

Artificial Intelligence Tools: <https://tech.msu.edu/ai/>

Author Checklist for MSU Extension Educational Materials: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/author-checklist-for-msu-extension-educational-materials>

Copyright Registration Guidance: Works Containing Material Generated by Artificial Intelligence: <https://comms.msu.edu/resources/use-of-ai>

Interim Guidance on Data Uses and Risks of Generative AI: <https://tech.msu.edu/about/guidelines-policies/generative-ai/>

IT Readiness Form: <https://tdx.msu.edu/TDClient/32/Portal/Requests/ServiceOfferingDet?ID=316>

Keeping It Legit: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/keeping-it-legit>

Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat documentation: <https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/copilot/microsoft-copilot>

MSU AI (including MSU guidelines): <https://ai.msu.edu/>

MSU Institutional Data Policy: <https://tech.msu.edu/about/guidelines-policies/msu-institutional-data-policy/>

MSU Institutional Data Policy, Appendix 1: Confidential Data: <https://tech.msu.edu/about/guidelines-policies/msu-institutional-data-policy/#Appendix1>

MSU University Marketing and Communications Generative AI Guidelines: <https://comms.msu.edu/resources/use-of-ai>

Text Citations and References Checklist: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/text-citations-and-references-checklist>

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