



## AI and writing

Academic writing is a form of professional writing that you can learn. An academic text contributes to the academic discourse in a discipline by introducing new research results or perspectives. AI tools can support the writing process if you use them correctly. In this handout, you can find suggestions on writing with AI.

### Why write?

Working on a text fulfils two tasks: The final text shows whether you have learnt to correctly summarise content, refer to sources and use academic language. Depending on the study progress, teachers expect a line of argumentation and, if necessary, the presentation of empirical results as well as their analysis and discussion. The writing process is even more important: The aim of seminar papers is to **familiarise yourself with academic writing as “thinking tool”**. Writing an academic text is a path to knowledge that requires precision in thinking and language as well as constant decision-making. This is why it is and remains so hard to write academic texts if you are not familiar with the conventions and academic language. Your development in academic writing is therefore all the more essential the more new insights you gain when writing the text.

### When can I use AI in writing projects in a meaningful way?

- **Pre-writing:** AI text tools can, for example, suggest topics, generate ideas, develop arguments in the form of a Socratic dialogue, create suggestions for research questions, serve as a dictionary (thesaurus), convert your verbal thoughts into written text (e.g. dictate function of Microsoft or Google, WhisperWizard), read texts aloud (e.g. Text Reader, Pickle) or translate foreign-language texts (e.g. DeepL).
- **Writing:** AI text tools can, for example, produce text (e.g. Mistral, Microsoft Copilot), generate tables of contents (e.g. for seminar papers), create literature reviews (e.g. ResearchRabbit, Connected Papers) or give feedback on selected passages of your texts.
- **Revising:** AI text tools can, for example, give feedback on language, style, text coherence, spelling and correction, grammar and punctuation, help you express what you would like to say or suggest synonyms (e.g. ChatGPT, DeepL Write, Grammarly).

The [AI Guidelines of the University of Vienna \(2023, 55ff.\)](#) provide an overview of situations in which the use of text-generative AI tools does make sense (from the perspective of teachers).

### What should I consider when using text-generative AI for writing?

- You can enhance academic thinking mainly through writing: Make sure you develop your writing skills before relying on text-generative AI. The more expertise you gain in your discipline, the more useful AI will be to you.
- Are you infringing **data protection provisions** by uploading a text?
- Are you infringing **copyright** by uploading another person’s text?
- Are you breaching **confidentiality** by uploading another person’s text?
- **Text-generative AI is a tool:** The function and form of any tool influences the work process, over which you, as the user, must ultimately retain control (think, for example, of the difference between writing by hand and on a computer). In order for a tool to unfold its benefits, the question is how you can pair text-generative AI as a tool/aid with your writing strategies, uncertainties and strengths in such a way that they support your writing and cognitive processes and/or help you achieve a better text product.

- Always use text-generative AI tools in such a way **that you have the final say**. You remain responsible for the text because text-generative AI cannot be an author. Text-generative AI tools are language models with no consciousness. They are based on linguistic data and thus simulate human language. This is why AI may generate biased, unclear and incorrect information that seems plausible. You should always cross-check the generated contents by using multiple sources and comparing the results.
- **The requirements of the course apply:** The teacher decides on (non-)permitted materials in the course. Everything that is not explicitly permitted is forbidden. Before you start working on the text, obtain information about how you should document the use of text-generative AI tools and other aids. Always adhere to the data protection regulations.

#### **What should I consider and which decisions do I have to take?**

- Check the **technical terms** used: Terms have different meanings in different disciplines (e.g. 'truth', 'discourse', 'system', etc.). If you ask an AI tool for a definition, it will generate the one that occurs most frequently in its training data set. This definition may differ from the one in your (sub-)discipline or may simply be wrong. Do not copy definitions or terms without comparing them to multiple sources.
- **Dependence on technology:** Relying too heavily on AI-assisted writing strategies may inhibit your ability to think independently and to solve problems without technological assistance. At the beginning of your studies, you should not use AI too often.
- **Acquire a new competence:** The ability to understand and to use AI is a competence that you can learn. Therefore, you should engage in continuous learning to ensure the best possible use of this technology.
- **You remain the author of your text:** Use tools that help you in your writing process.