

Comparing AI Writing and Independent Writing

For a thought provoking assignment that can help your students practice their writing and analysis skills, assign them a comparative project, where both students and a generative AI tool are provided with the same prompt. Try using a prompt that requires the author to express a personal opinion and provide examples from their own experiences. From here, you have many options for opening up discussion:

1. Self-evaluation. Have students read over their own work and the response generated by AI and compare the two. What did they think they did better than the AI model, and where did they think the AI model did better than them?
2. Peer-evaluation. Have students read over other students' work or responses produced by generative AI and workshop the two. Consider not disclosing whether the piece they are reading was written by a fellow student or by AI, and see if they can tell the difference. Ask them what made them guess one or the other. You may also want to provide your students with the rubric you would use to grade their papers, and have them use it to grade the pieces written by AI. Or, you may do so yourself, as in the next option:
3. Teacher evaluation. Read and assign a grade to the pieces written by generative AI, using the same rubric you would use to grade any student paper. (If time constraints don't allow you to grade each one, then select one or two AI-written pieces as examples.) Open a discussion with students to reflect on why they think you graded the AI pieces as you did.
4. Prompt revision. For some practice in prompt engineering, have students revise the instructions they gave to generative AI once they're written their own piece and evaluated AI's first effort. What changes do they make? Do these changes improve the output? What types of elements improve with revised prompts, and what remains deficient? (For more ideas and activities related to prompt engineering, see our activities on Role/Tone and on Prompt Engineering for Teaching Writing.)

Note: For any assignment where you are asking students to employ AI, remember to verify the parameters for AI use allowed at your institution. Keep in mind privacy and confidentiality concerns of these models, and make sure students are aware that there is not an assumption of confidentiality for any data or information they use to prompt a model. AI tools will incorporate those prompts into the data that trains their model. For students who do not want to use AI tools for these reasons, consider having an alternative assignment that will achieve similar learning outcomes but does not require the use of an AI tool.

Sources

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