

Lesson 5 Becoming a Digital Citizen

Reading 1

A Guide for Students in the Age of AI

From making shopping recommendations to planning the best route to an unfamiliar destination, AI has quietly become an integral part of our daily lives. As with any new technology, however, AI does not come without challenges and risks. Some worry that AI will take over human jobs, while others foresee an end to human imagination. This fear of new technology is nothing new. When the telephone was invented in the late 1800s, The New York Times warned that it would only be used to invade people's privacy.

Similarly, when e-book readers first came into existence, some people said that printed books would disappear off the face of the earth. As history has proven, neither of these claims turned out to be true. Like in the past, the human race will adapt to life with AI and learn to take full advantage of it.

These days, a type of AI called generative AI can create various content, including texts, images, sounds and videos. It identifies patterns and structures within existing data to generate new and original content in a matter of seconds. Its usages and benefits are boundless. For example, in the healthcare industry, it is used to convert X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs into more realistic images for better patient diagnosis. In the gaming industry, generative AI makes games more exciting by creating new characters, levels, storylines, and even realistic human voices.

There is no doubt that the future of generative AI is bright and we all have something to gain from it.

For students like you, it has rapidly become a powerful tool with endless possibilities. Not only do students of today have access to much more information than previous generations, but they also have more power than ever to produce new content.

The former prime minister of the U.K. Winston Churchill once said, "Where there is great power, there is great responsibility." As a responsible student, you must take caution to use generative AI wisely and appropriately. Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when using it.

1 Provide Good Instructions

It's important to know how to give good instructions to generative AI before you start using it. The instructions should be clear and concise so AI can understand what you want and give you the desired results. If you don't take the time to think and carefully write your instructions to AI, you will not get helpful and appropriate output. When giving AI directions, provide as much context and detail as possible since AI is not a mind reader and only knows what you tell it. For example, don't say, "Can you recommend a book to read?" Instead, ask, "Can you recommend a book for a first-year high school student interested in American history?" Remember that AI is only as good as its user.

2 Have Doubt

AI output needs to be taken with a grain of salt since AI sometimes provides output that is faulty or not true. This is due to the very nature of AI. Generative AI is programmed to provide output. So it always tries to fulfill its function by producing output, whether it is accurate or not. Moreover, the quality of AI output depends on the database which it was trained with. If the database contains faulty or biased data, it can adversely affect the results provided by AI. Questioning whether the AI's results are reliable or not is an essential skill to have when using AI. Make sure to double-check the output against other sources, especially if it gives you a fact or a number. In the end, it is you who are responsible for how accurate the information in your work is, even if it comes from AI.

3 Be Responsible

As the capabilities of AI increase, it is more important than ever to use AI responsibly. What that means to you as students is that you shouldn't have AI do all the work for you. You should use it to supplement your work. Let's say you are trying to write a poem for a school assignment. You can consult AI to come up with ideas for the theme of your poem or explore different styles. However, you cannot have AI write the actual assignment for you. In other words, you cannot take credit for work you have not created. At the end of any project or work where you have received help from AI, explain how and to what extent. Not doing this could be considered a dishonest act.

Just as a pair of expensive running shoes will not transform a poor runner into an Olympic athlete, AI will not automatically turn you into a great scholar unless you put in the hard work. In order to fully take advantage of AI, you must prepare yourself and be ready. Only then can you use AI wisely and responsibly to achieve greatness.

Reading 2

Bridging the Digital Divide

Never in my life have I ever felt uncomfortable with technology. As a member of the digital native generation, I grew up in a world where technology was part of daily life. I start my day by waking up to the alarm on my smartphone and end it by watching videos on a tablet in bed. In other words, digital devices are with me twenty-four seven. This, however, is not the case for everyone.

Last month, I was at a restaurant that took orders only through a kiosk. There was an older person at the front of the line. She tried to order food several times, but she was unsuccessful. Embarrassed, she left the restaurant in a rush. I was surprised that something so familiar to me could be so difficult for someone else.

On the way home, I saw a notice for the Digital Buddy program run by the local community center. It was about teaching older people how to use digital devices. I decided to join this program with my friends.

Over the next few weeks, we taught older people how to use digital devices like smartphones, tablets, and kiosks. We were shocked to find that over half of them had never used a kiosk before. The center provided us with kiosks so that people could practice using them.

Working with people who were not used to technology wasn't always easy. Many were hesitant initially because they thought they would break the devices or screw something up. Once, I was having a difficult time teaching an older gentleman how to place an order. He kept pressing the cancel button at the final stage. Detecting my frustration, he said, "When I was young, everyone asked me for help with machines. But now I can't even order a chicken sandwich." My face turned red with shame. Since then, I have learned to put myself in older people's shoes to comprehend how difficult it must be for them to learn new technology.

With encouragement, the older people soon began to make progress. Not only did they learn how to order food through kiosks, but they also learned how to use digital devices for daily tasks such as banking and shopping. It was incredibly rewarding to see their faces light up as they became active participants in the digital society.

The Digital Buddy program was a great opportunity to feel the joy of sharing my knowledge with others and understand my responsibilities as a digital citizen. I came to realize it is teenagers like me that could play a significant role in bridging the digital divide and making the world brighter.