# Artificial Intelligence Writing Tools in Writing Across the Curriculum Settings

A Statement from the AWAC Executive Committee*
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For over a decade, researchers and entrepreneurs have been developing Artificial Intelligence text generators. In recent years, tools such as OpenAI's GPT-2 and GPT-3 or Chat GPT have become sophisticated enough to produce texts that some readers find difficult to distinguish from texts produced by human writers. This development raises practical, pedagogical, and ethical concerns, including in academic settings.

A fundamental tenet of Writing Across the Curriculum is that writing is a mode of learning. Students develop understanding and insights through the act of writing. Rather than writing simply being a matter of presenting existing information or furnishing products for the purpose of testing or grading, writing is a fundamental means to create deep learning and foster cognitive development. Learning to write within a field or major is also one of the most critical ways that emerging scholars and professionals become enculturated in a discourse community. We are concerned that relying on AI text generators limits student learning and enculturation.

## Our Position

As scholars in the discipline of writing studies more fully explore the practical and ethical implications of AI language generators in classroom and other settings, we underscore this: Writing to learn is an intellectual activity that is crucial to the cognitive and social development of learners and writers. This vital activity cannot be replaced by AI language generators.

That said, we understand that institutions, departments, and faculty will have to decide locally what role AI text generators should play in their situations. Some learning communities might reject these technologies outright, including them, for example, in campus policies about plagiarism. Other communities might find productive pedagogical roles for this technology; indeed, some writing teachers are having students explore and experiment, in a critical fashion, with AI writing: its potential for aspects of the writing process, its limitations, its ethics, its costs.

Furthermore, in some professional fields, AI tools have been available for years, and professors in those fields have incorporated attention to them in teaching.

## Context, Past and Future

The history of writing is marked by changes in technologies that have shaped how people write and what writing can accomplish: from clay tablets to papyrus, quill pens to pencils, handwriting to typing to texting, words to image to design to multimodality, physical library to the world wide web. On one hand, AI text generators are yet another technology with potential uses in various invention, drafting, and editing processes. On the other hand, their potential autonomy from human writers makes them qualitatively different from previous technologies.

While exclusively having AIs generate writing does not engage students in an essential mode of learning, it is also clear that writing scholars and WAC faculty should explore whether–and, if so, how–AI text generation tools might be integrated into writing pedagogy. The WAC Clearinghouse hosts a page of useful resources: [AI Text Generators and Teaching Writing: Starting Points for Inquiry](). We might pose these research questions: Might the acts of critiquing, rewriting, or discussing AI-generated text foster growth? Are there scenarios where student writing might productively be complemented, supplemented, or assisted by AI language generators?  Can this happen in ways that do not preempt student learning?

It is premature to provide answers to such questions, which need thoughtful investigation. We look forward to that research.

## Reaffirming Best Practices

Current AI discussions remind us, yet again, of long-established best practices in Writing Across the Curriculum, grounded in research and extant for decades: designing meaningful and specific assignments that foster learning and develop skills; focusing on processes and practices such as peer-response and revision; encouraging writing in multiple genres, including ones connected to specific disciplinary practices.

We recommend fostering the kind of deep learning and cognitive development that students gain through writing to learn and through learning to write in specific situations.

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## *About AWAC and this Document