

For the purposes of First-Year Composition (FYC), I group GenAI Activities into two conceptual categories: activities that invite students to (1) build GenAI literacy and (2) use GenAI primarily to maximize critical thinking (rather than to manipulate the tool to generate polished, publishable output). Research on, interviews about, and experience using GenAI continue to show that students need a baseline understanding of the writing process and practice in composing, revising, editing, and publishing work before they can best use GenAI to produce texts.

## **BUILDING GenAI LITERACY**

By the time they complete their FYC requirements, students should have a baseline understanding of what GenAI is, how it works, and what its strengths and weaknesses are. Instructors should use class time for activities that deepen student knowledge about this emerging technology and that give students time to play with the tool and critique its output. There are infinite ways to do this. Below are just a few ideas.

### **Activity 1: Playing with GenAI//Critiquing Output**

- Direct students to access the GenAI app of choice (Claude, ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot)
  - Choose one of the prompts below, and model for students your process of prompting and prompting to adjust for different details/structure/tone/length
  - Ask students to choose one of the prompts below and play around just as you did. [Before choosing a prompt, WARN STUDENTS about PRIVACY CONCERNS with giving information to open GPTs]
1. Write a biography of (insert your favorite artist/celebrity/iconic figure here).
  2. Tell the story of the \_\_\_\_\_ family (insert your family here and consider adding a few relevant details about your family to the prompt)
  3. Write a 500 word personal narrative (prompt it with the basics of some personal story)
- Project the following three questions on the board, and ask students to discuss with one peer next to them.
    1. What was most surprising about your experience prompting and playing around?
    2. What impressed you the most about the output?
    3. What problems/drawbacks did you encounter?
  - Whole group discussion about where this tool is helpful, where it might have problems, what we gain, what we lose from using this, where YOUR voice and information and particularities are important
  - In-class writing reflection on their experience

### **Activity 2: In-class Group Debate: Should FYC Students Use ChatGPT**

Begin class by watching: [AI for Education: Using AI Critically in the Classroom](#) then having students quietly read [Time Magazine's article](#) about Open AI's use of Kenyan workers to train their early models

1. Divide class into half, assign position either “FYC Students SHOULD NOT use GenAI” or “FYC Students SHOULD use GenAI”
2. Students open all the readings they’ve done prior to this class meeting. They refer to the video and article that began this class period. They engage in a 5 minute individual brainstorming session where they write down all the possible ideas for their assigned argument (for or against using GenAI in FYC)
3. Remainder of the class: split into groups of 3 and plan 3-minute opening statement and prep for possible counterarguments. ALL groups should be prepared to debate. Instructor can tell the groups beforehand that only one debate will take place OR can tell them that multiple debates will occur simultaneously so that they are all equally prepared

They should be preparing for the following debate format:

Format

1. FYC students SHOULD use GenAI: 3-minute Persuasive Presentation (opposing group takes notes to prepare cross examination/counterarguments)  
**3 minutes prep time in between**
2. 2 minutes for SHOULD NOT USE to pose counterarguments and cross examine Should Exist group (anyone from group can ask questions and anyone from group can respond, must raise hand)
3. FYC students SHOULD NOT use GenAI: 3-minute Persuasive Presentation (affirming group takes notes to prepare cross examination/counterarguments)  
**3 minutes prep time in between**
4. 2 minutes for SHOULD USE to pose counterarguments and cross examine  
**3 minutes prep time in between**
5. 1 minute closing statement from SHOULD USE  
**3 minutes prep time in between**
6. 1 minute closing statement from SHOULD NOT USE

Next class period: DEBATE/DISCUSS/REFLECT

- Ask for groups to volunteer to debate. Only one SHOULD USE and one SHOULD NOT USE group will debate, ultimately. The others will watch and take notes.
- Hold debate
- Class discussion and voting about which side “Won”
- Students complete written reflection on how the debate or debate prep impacted their beliefs about GenAI and writing

## THINKING CRITICALLY WITH GenAI

Students can learn to think more critically about their texts by leveraging GenAI during the revision stage of the writing process when they have already spent time thinking deeply about their topic and crafting an initial draft. Instructors should develop activities that require students to develop complex, unique prompts to engage GenAI in a higher-level conversation about their draft. By taking time to write out detailed information about their writing purpose and rhetorical situation in a GenAI prompt, students demonstrate meta-awareness of their writing process. To help transfer that awareness to future writing contexts, instructors can ask students to reflect on

the experience of composing the GenAI prompt, helping students notice that the time and thought they spent to craft the prompt has a direct relationship to both the helpfulness of GenAI's output and also to their own deeper understanding of the rhetoric of their writing.

### **Activity 3: Audience Analysis and GenAI**

Students should engage in this activity after turning in the first draft of any writing assignment or project.

1. Direct students' attention to the audience for whom they are composing their draft. For some projects, this audience will be predetermined/assigned by the instructor. For projects without an assigned audience, students should take a moment to articulate WHO their intended audience is.
2. Ask students to compose a brief audience profile/audience analysis in which they provide the following information about their intended audience:
  - a. Who are they?
  - b. What do they need?
  - c. What do they enjoy?
  - d. How will they be reading/watching/listening?
  - e. Why will they be reading/watching/listening?

(adapted from [Purdue Owl's Audience Analysis Overview](#))

3. Have students provide their audience profile to some GenAI LLM app of choice. Next, have them provide their draft and ask the AI to highlight ways they might improve their draft to better meet the needs and interests of their intended audience,
4. Ask students to complete a written reflection on how (1) the act of composing the audience profile and (2) the dialogue with GenAI affected their ideas for how to revise the draft.