



The AI Marketing and Communications Guidelines were developed to provide a framework for leveraging artificial intelligence tools for our marketing and communication efforts across the College of ACES and Extension. This AI policy is meant to serve as a guide and provide direction to offer consistency of usage. It should be viewed from a MarCom lens, as each unit or program may have its guidelines for educational content. These guidelines are subject to change as AI continues to evolve.

What is AI?

AI stands for “Artificial Intelligence.” It’s a technology that allows computers to do things that normally require human thinking, like solving problems, understanding language, and making decisions.

Think of AI as a smart helper that can learn from the information it receives and improve over time. You probably already use these tools daily, like when you ask your phone’s virtual assistant a question or get personalized recommendations from a website.

Generative AI, a subset of AI, has gained popularity lately. This uses simulated neural networks trained on large datasets to generate novel images, sounds, and texts in response to user prompts. Examples of this include ChatGPT, Copilot, Claude, Gemini, Bard, etc.

How Should I Use AI?

AI can be very helpful in your work. For marketing and communication, AI can assist with writing emails, creating content, analyzing data, or even helping you understand what your audience wants.

For example, AI tools can help generate ideas for social media posts or create reports based on your data. Start with simple tools that assist with writing or organizing your work, and don’t be afraid to experiment to see how they can save you time.

Potential AI Risks

1. AI does not always understand the full context of your prompt or will make up information to give you an answer (in the AI world this is referred to as a “hallucination”), resulting in false information.
2. AI tools learn from data that can make unfair or inaccurate decisions if that data is biased.
3. AI tools may generate content that unintentionally violates copyright laws, like using images or text that belong to others without proper permission.
4. AI can assist with tasks but cannot replace human creativity or judgment.

By being aware of these risks and taking steps to manage them, you can use AI tools more effectively and responsibly.

AI Best Practices

1. Always verify AI-generated content by cross-referencing with trusted sources.
2. Be cautious when relying on AI-generated content or suggestions, especially in sensitive matters like hiring or communication to avoid biases.
3. Ensure that any AI-generated content follows legal copyright and intellectual property guidelines.
4. When using AI, be mindful of the information you provide. Do not share confidential, proprietary, or sensitive information with AI tools that may store or process the data in ways that compromise privacy. Extension MarCom/IT recommends using Copilot. It uses a private sandbox model that does not relay input data back to the working LLM dataset.
5. Use AI as a tool to help you, but rely on your insights, experience, and personal touch to make final decisions or create unique content.
6. It’s necessary to be transparent when using AI-generated content, especially in professional or public communication. Always disclose that AI was involved in creating content so your audience knows it wasn’t entirely human-made by using citations on documents or acknowledgments on PowerPoints.

Examples

AI for Writing

Scenario

A staff member is working on their unit's annual impact report, and they want to save time by using AI text generators to write stories on their behalf.

Cautions

AI text generators can use filler text or generalized storylines that may result in written content that doesn't have a human touch or sound. It may reiterate the same points, causing the story to sound repetitious and reducing the flow of the content.

Best Practices

AI can be used to generate feedback or suggestions for improving their writing style, clarity, or coherence to refine their language and expression of the story. Users can also integrate AI to brainstorm and draft written content. While it can be used as a starting point or foundation, writers should customize it by adding personal insights and context. AI should always serve as a collaborator, not a substitute, for quality work.

AI for Photos and Videos

Scenario

A staff member is writing an article about an invasive species in Southern Illinois. They do not have a photo to use as an example, so they look to an AI-generated photo as an accompaniment.

Cautions

AI-generated images may not truly reflect the characteristics or features of plants, wildlife species, or humans. Proper identification of species is crucial to maintaining institutional integrity. Just because an image is available does not mean one has permission to use it. Staff should also follow attribution, copyright, and trademark protection guidelines when using media.

Best Practices

Find approved images from vetted sources outlined on the COMMIT website at:

extension.illinois.edu/commit/photos

Each user is responsible for verifying accuracy, safeguarding data and user information, and ethically using AI tools and resources. For more information regarding University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's AI guidelines, visit the Office of the Provost's Generative AI Solutions Hub: go.illinois.edu/GenAIAdminOps

For a list of generative AI resources vetted and approved by University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Technology Services, visit: techservices.illinois.edu/generative-ai-resources.

Sources

- ibm.com/topics/artificial-intelligence
- forbes.com/councils/forbescommunicationscouncil/2024/01/24/15-ways-ai-helps-comms-teams-improve-their-marketing-efforts
- ibm.com/blog/10-ai-dangers-and-risks-and-how-to-manage-them
- genai.illinois.edu/best-practices-promoting-critical-thinking

Modified January 2025



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

extension.illinois.edu