

# AI at Northeastern

## A Student Guide

AI is everywhere, and you may feel equally excited, confused, or worried about its impact on your education and career prospects. How do you know when and when not to use AI to enhance your learning and prepare for professional opportunities where you will be expected to use it?

This guide helps you to get the most from these powerful tools while staying true to your learning goals and making sure you're ready for professional experiences from co-op to career.

### Big Ideas

- 1 You've got resources!** As a Northeastern student, you have access to a proprietary version of the AI platform, [Claude](#). Neither Anthropic nor NU actively monitor individual conversations and Anthropic does not use NU conversations to train Claude or products. You also have access to other AI tools and AI features in existing tools. To guide you in using these tools, Northeastern has developed [university-wide policies](#) on ethical, responsible use of AI that are important for you to read and understand.
- 2 Every class is different.** Just as teaching styles vary, so do AI policies among courses. Take time to check each syllabus and don't be shy about asking your professor about their expectations.
- 3 Struggle is good for your brain.** Think of learning like going to the gym – resistance builds strength. Use AI to enhance your understanding, not to skip the workout entirely.
- 4 Learn about AI.** AI isn't magic. It has real limitations when it comes to bias, ethics, judgment, accuracy, and creativity. Understanding these helps you use it wisely and prepares you for success in the AI-filled workplace after graduation.
- 5 The golden rule still applies in an age of AI.** Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Building and maintaining trust with your peers and professors is worth more than any shortcut. Be honest about how you use AI, use it with integrity, and keep the needs of others in mind.

**Remember:** You're here to grow as a thinker and creator. AI should amplify your unique voice, not replace it. When confused, ask – seeking clarity is always the right move.

## You've got resources!

Northeastern recognizes that AI is transforming education and work, and we want you to be prepared. We understand that AI means different things to different people – from excitement about opportunities to concerns about the environment, privacy, and academic integrity. This is why the university is actively working to identify the most beneficial and relevant uses for your education and career preparation.

To support you in this process, Northeastern has established university-wide [AI policies](#) and provides [enterprise-level tools](#) such as [Claude](#). You can take a [free course on the Essentials Concepts of AI](#) from Northeastern and earn a badge.

You can explore AI capabilities in a safe, university-supported environment that meets Northeastern's security and ethical standards. While the university provides these tools, using them responsibly is up to you. Neither Anthropic nor Northeastern actively monitors individual conversations or trains on your data. Northeastern does reserve the right to access data from digital systems when required and permitted by law. Take time to understand the university's [Responsible Use guidance](#). It's there to protect both you and your academic community.

## Every class is different.

Just as each of your professors has their own teaching style, they also have different expectations and rules about AI use. This variety reflects the diverse ways AI impacts different fields and learning objectives.

### ***What You Need to Do***

- Check each syllabus carefully for guidance about AI usage.
- Ask your professors if you're unsure or if an AI policy isn't noted. They want you to succeed and would rather answer questions up front than encounter misunderstandings later.
- Understand that some assignments may allow AI use while others won't, even in the same course.

**Tip:** Create a simple chart listing each course assignment and its AI policy. Update it throughout the semester as you receive new assignments. This small effort now saves confusion later.

## Struggle is good for your brain.

As a human being, you have unique value and viewpoints to offer the world. These are developed, in part, through grappling with concepts and ideas and figuring things out independently. Leaning into learning when it's challenging is like going to the gym; the resistance builds strength. AI can be an incredible learning partner, but it shouldn't do your heavy lifting.

Emerging research shows that frequent AI tool usage correlates with decreased critical thinking skills ([Gerlich, 2025](#)) in society. Yet other research shows that using AI intentionally to learn can have beneficial effects ([Wang & Fan, 2025](#)).

Consider using AI to explain concepts to you in different ways until something clicks, or to quiz you on material you're studying. AI can powerfully accelerate learning when used strategically. It can also be

helpful to check your understanding by explaining concepts back to AI, and to engage in dialogue with it as you brainstorm or organize your thoughts. The key is using AI as a study partner, not as a substitute for your own thinking.

- Rather than using AI to write your essays, develop media, or complete your problem sets, consider using it to:
  - [Check your understanding of your learning.](#)
  - [Prepare for quizzes and exams.](#)
  - [Practice and apply your learning.](#)
- Resist the temptation to use it when assignment guidelines direct you to work independently.
- Remember that employers will expect you to be able to think critically, without AI assistance. Your classes and homework offer you the opportunity to develop these skills.

Check out [guides authored by Northeastern students](#) for additional advice and ideas (student guides tab).

**Tip:** Ask yourself: "Am I using AI to understand better, or to avoid understanding altogether?" Your honest answer will guide you.

## Learn about AI.

Whether or not you use AI, understanding how it works is becoming as essential as knowing how to use email or search engines. You'll encounter AI in the workplace, in the everyday tools you use, and in society's ongoing conversations about technology.

### *Key Areas to Explore*

**Data:** AI learns from massive amounts of human-created content and information. Understanding what datasets were used, what might be missing, and how this affects outputs helps you evaluate AI responses critically.

**Ethics:** AI can perpetuate biases, cause harm, and raise privacy concerns. Knowing these limitations helps you use AI more responsibly and advocate for better practices in your field.

**Judgment:** AI can process information quickly but lacks human context and wisdom. You need to know when human judgment is irreplaceable such as ethical decision making, creative expression, factual accuracy, or understanding nuanced human experiences.

**Creativity:** Innovation comes from human imagination, lived experiences, and the ability to connect disparate ideas in meaningful ways. Understanding AI's creative limitations helps you value and develop your own creative voice. In addition, AI can be used in creative ways to develop valuable resources for the world. You may be able to make something special with it, even if technology isn't your thing.

**Tool Use:** While you have institutional access to several AI tools, you might experiment with other free AI tools to learn more about their features and abilities. Such tools will not necessarily have the same level of privacy as the tools Northeastern provides.

AI technologies have limitations and are also continually changing. You will be better at bringing the right human skills to any situation if you keep learning about and considering these changes and their limitations.

**Tip:** Contextual factors will often determine appropriate and effective use of AI. Take the time to consider the possibilities and the concerns about how you use or don't use it in each situation.

## The golden rule still applies.

Here's a principle to guide all your AI use: *Use AI with others as you would want them to use AI with you.*

### What This Looks Like in Practice

- **In group projects:** Discuss expectations for AI use from the outset as you decide how you will work as a team. Depending on the project and your instructor's assignment policy, AI could be helpful for your group to use as part of its brainstorming process and other tasks to augment the group's routine work. But would you want your teammates to let AI do all their work, especially if the course policy stated not to? Probably not. Be transparent about any AI assistance and ensure you're contributing your own thinking.
- **In discussions:** If someone used AI to generate all their discussion posts, would that feel fair if you have taken the time to read and respond with your own thoughts? Show respect by reading your classmates' posts and composing your own response. Make sure your voice and insights shine through.
- **At co-op:** Would you want a colleague to submit AI-generated work as their own? Always maintain professional integrity by both learning and adhering to the organization's expectations about AI use and being sure that work you pass in as your own is yours. Employers may want you to use AI effectively, but they frown on generic AI-generated work and you risk looking lazy.
- **With professors:** Would you want students to use AI to complete assessments if you were teaching? Your professors need to know you're actually learning the material and can do the work yourself; it's their job to make sure you're prepared. When you use AI outside the boundaries they've set, you make it impossible for them to help you learn or fairly evaluate your progress.

When you're transparent about AI use and thoughtful about its impact on others, you build trust. This trust with professors, peers, and future employers is far more valuable than any shortcut AI might offer.



# Moving Forward

Northeastern University is a community that values both innovation and integrity. AI tools are part of your toolkit for your learning, productivity, and solving problems. Your unique perspectives, creative solutions, and human connections are what set you apart.

When in doubt about AI use, ask for guidance. Transparency is always the right choice. Your learning and professional journey is uniquely yours, and technology should amplify your abilities, not replace them.

Your thoughtful engagement with these tools today prepares you to be a leader in tomorrow's AI-integrated workplace. That includes knowing when to not use AI.

## ***Need Help?***

- [Essential Concepts of AI Course](#)
- [Claude at Northeastern](#)
- [How do I access Claude?](#)
- [IT Service Desk](#)

*This guide was developed with input from faculty in every college, undergraduate and graduate students, and representatives from the Offices of the Chancellor and Provost.*

