What is ChatGPT?

ChatGPT is a chatbot that's specifically designed to generate human-like text responses. The full name is Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer. Like all chatbots, it is AI-assisted, which means it uses artificial intelligence to create responses.

What sets ChatGPT apart from other chatbots is its ability to seemingly carry on a conversation. It remembers all of the questions and prompts that you ask it within a single conversation, and uses those as context when formulating its next response. This means the bot can answer follow-up questions in really meaningful ways and refine its responses/results to give you exactly the answer you need.

ChatGPT was trained on a massive amount of data and has a deep understanding of how language is used. When you ask it a question, it "scrapes the web," meaning it mines all of the information on the internet and gives you the most relevant content mashed up together.

One important caveat to know is that ChatGPT does not cite sources, so you can't tell where the information is coming from. There are obviously copyright and plagiarism issues that we need to collectively consider in regards to artificial intelligence. There are also issues of bias and misinformation that need to be considered.

ChatGPT is free to use, but a paid option -- ChatGPT Plus -- was also recently made available.

What can ChatGPT be used for?

- **Generating texts:** ChatGPT can be prompted to generate almost everything from Instagram captions, tweets, essays, stories, emails, and more.

- **Summarization:** It is also capable of understanding and synthesizing large amounts of information and condensing it into a summary.

- **Rewording:** The chatbot's deep understanding of language gives it the capability to reword texts at the level or tone you instruct it to.

- **Language translation:** ChatGPT can also be used to translate words and complete phrases into different languages.

- **Coding:** It also understands programming languages and can generate codes based on your prompts.

- **Data analysis and research:** Because ChatGPT was trained on vast knowledge from the internet, it is an effective research tool. It understands requests and questions with better precision than search engines like Google and provides personalized results worded specifically for the user.

How can these uses of ChatGPT be relevant for teachers?

Here are some prompts that teachers in our online community have used successfully:

• "Write exemplar responses for open-ended questions" - Gwen D.

• "Write an email to parents about disruptive behavior in the classroom" - Kathy G.

• "Write SMART goals" and "Write a 3-day lesson plan for a new prep" - Gayle A.

• "Write IEP for 11-year-old boy, 6th grade, ADHD, trouble with expressive writing, volume of writing" - Clarissa R. (This is a specific prompt a fellow educator of Clarrisa's has used and she tried a similar request for her own student)

• "Generic templates for letters of recommendation" and "Make a list of class rules" -Jennifer S.

• "Write a letter of recommendation for a student who has this list of attributes..." -Hannah H.

• "Create fill-in-the-blank verb practice for Spanish conjugations" - Lisa S.

• "What are some positive impacts and negative consequences of the Industrial Revolution in nineteenth-century Great Britain?" - Wendy D. (used to generate a document that her class used for a document citation activity)

How do I get started with ChatGPT?

1. Go to https://chat.openai.com/auth/login and choose "sign up" to create an account.
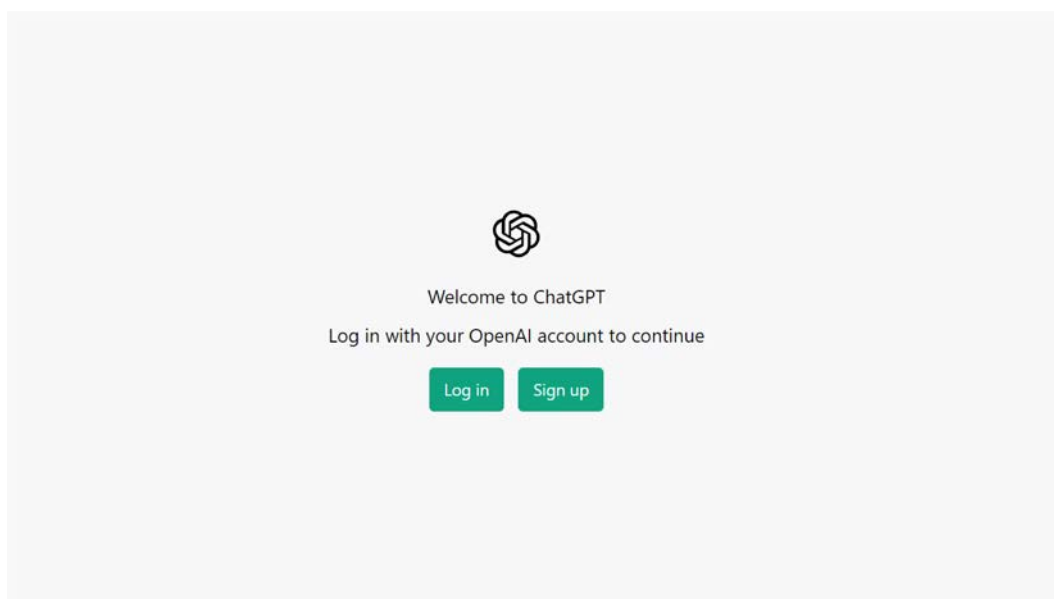
2. Once you're logged into ChatGPT, you'll see a user interface similar to the one below. On the left, you'll find the menu and activity log where you can access all of your conversations with the bot later on. The "new chat" button is also there. When you first log into ChatGPT, the log will be blank and the bot is automatically ready for a new chat. The middle part is where your conversation with the bot will appear. Below that is the text box where you will enter your prompts.
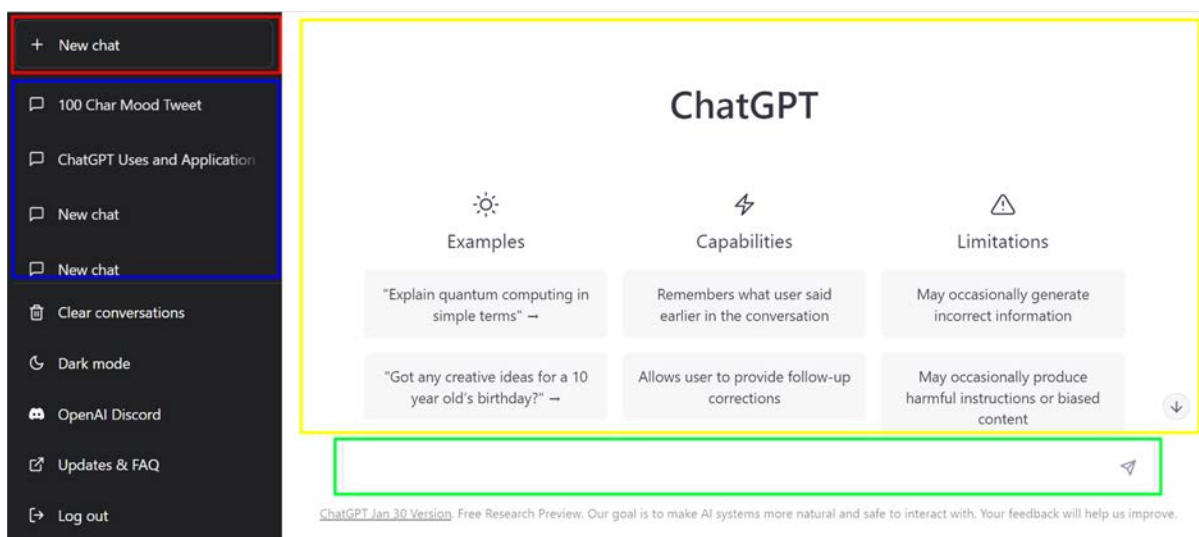

3. Start your conversation by typing in your question or prompt in the text box. ChatGPT operates on a higher level than your usual chatbot or search engine so it can understand questions or requests in full sentences. It also understands conversational language so you don't have to be robotic in how you give it commands. However, it does follow your lead. The more detailed your prompts are, the more detailed its responses will be. But don't feel pressured to give a hyper-focused request right away! You can always begin your conversations with a broader question or request, and then refine it in a follow-up question, just as you would when talking with a human.
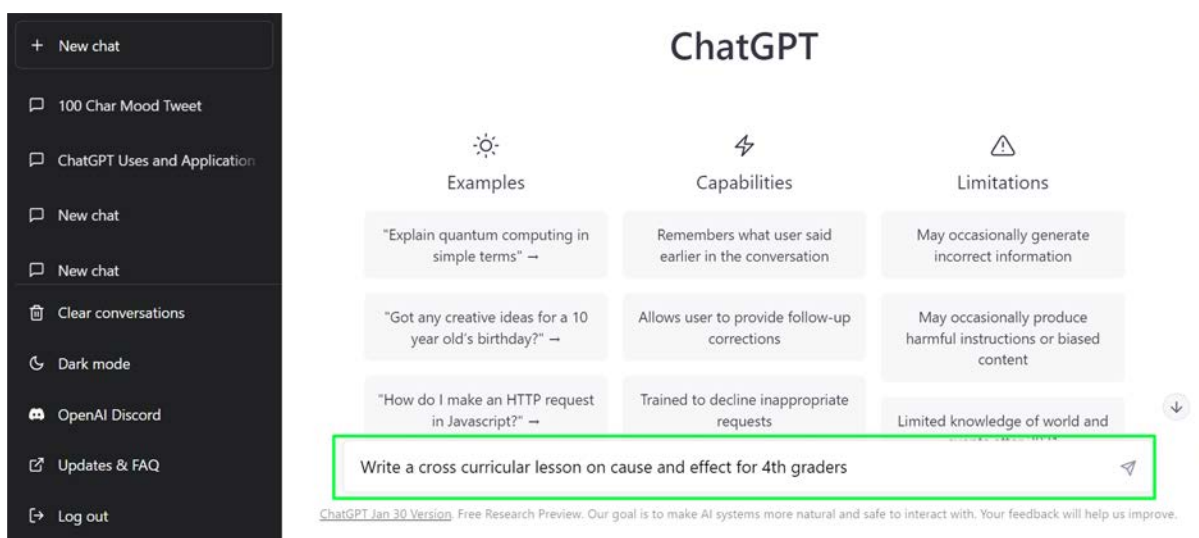
4. The conversation will flow similarly to how a text message or instant message function works, so the format should feel familiar. The bot's response to your prompt will appear in the center with your initial question above it. After answering your request, the text box below will clear, and you can enter your follow-up question or next request that's related to the same topic.
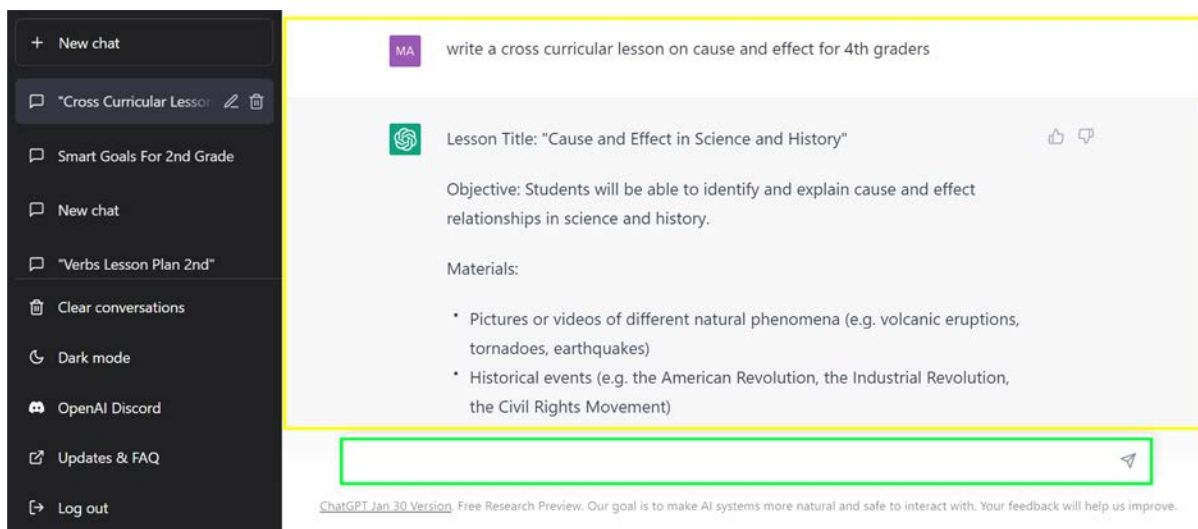
5. Keep in mind that your chat with the bot is like a real conversation. It remembers all previous questions and its own answers within that thread. That's why it's so good at responding to follow-up requests. If you want to give it a new task or you want a completely different result, start a new chat by clicking on "new chat" on the left.
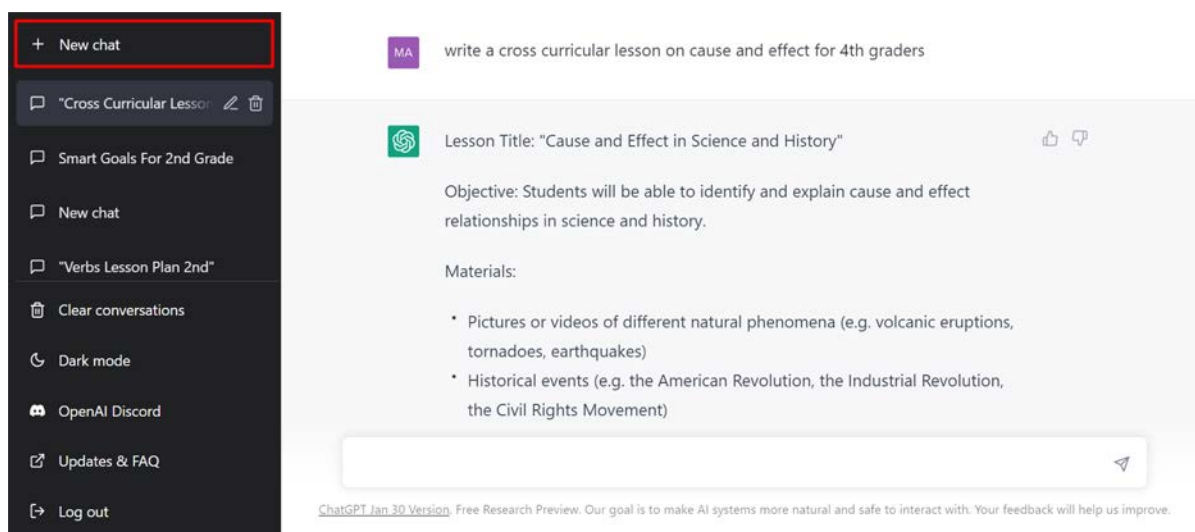
6. If you want to go back to a previous conversation to continue working on something, you can look for that on the activity log, also on the left. The conversations automatically give an intuitive title so you'll have no trouble finding what you need, although you can also edit the title by clicking on the pen icon beside the title.

Tips for getting the best results with ChatGPT

• **Master your prompts, and be prepared to refine your results.** The work that ChatGPT produces is only as good as the prompts that you feed it. If you ask it a basic question, it will give a basic answer. The more detailed your directions are, the more comprehensive the responses will be.

• **Don't retype information unnecessarily.** ChatGPT remembers your entire conversation with it, and its answers will always be based on that entire thread. This is great for refining prompts. You don't need to type "lesson plan on adverbs" and then type "lesson plan on adverbs for third grade." The bot will remember what you already told it, so you can just type, "for third grade."

• **Know when to start a new conversation.** If you want to move on to a new task or a new question, it's best to start a new conversation with it.

• **You can access all your previous conversions with ChatGPT from the menu.** Don't worry about starting a new conversation: you won't lose your previous ones. This means you can go back to any previous conversation and reference what ChatGPT responded with.

• **Always check the facts.** Although it seems smart, ChatGPT doesn't really think in the sense that humans think. It just responds based on the information it was trained on, which is a massive amount of data scraped from the internet, with a knowledge cutoff of 2021 (as of this writing.) If you're using ChatGPT for research, it would be wise to cross-check the information it provides you because it may be outdated or downright inaccurate.

• **Be wary of bias.** There have always been concerns about bias in algorithms and, ChatGPT is no exception. Here are some examples of that in other algorithms. Although its creators from OpenAI have placed safeguards to prevent ChatGPT from generating offensive responses, there have been reports of people who were able to bypass that guardrail.

• **Get to know ChatGPT for your own use first, and introduce it to students only with careful planning and under district guidelines.** There are data privacy laws, plagiarism concerns, and many other issues that schools are just beginning to sort out with artificial intelligence. Follow the guidance provided by your school and best practices identified by educators with expertise in this area. Our guide here only covers usage by teachers.

How teachers are using ChatGPT to save time in lesson planning

1. Create differentiated lessons.

ChatGPT can create personalized lesson plans in mere seconds. The more detailed your prompts are, the more targeted the AI-generated lesson plans will be. This will save you a lot of time–it's far easier to edit an existing lesson plan than write one from scratch.

The first time you try this, begin the conversation with the bot by asking if it can help in differentiating lesson plans. Ask it to give you an example without providing specific details about the student, grade level, or subject, just to get an idea of the type of response you will get.

The example we received from ChatGPT was a differentiated lesson plan for a math lesson on fractions. It included an objective (to understand and compare fractions >, <, and =) and generated a list of activities for visual, kinesthetic, and auditory learners. These learning type myths have been debunked, but since AI is using references on the internet, it pulled this information up. You can tell it to exclude these activities if you like.

ChatGPT also suggested assessments and modifications for students who need extra support and for those who need more challenge.

2. Write cross-curricular lesson plans.

When teacher Dawn L. tested it to write a lesson on cause and effect for fourth graders, ChatGOT created a cross-curricular lesson plan that she found to be completely usable.

In an attempt to get the same results as Dawn, we prompted the bot to "write a cross curricular lesson on cause and effect for 4th graders." The result was a lesson plan called, "Cause and Effect in Science and History." The lesson included an objective, the materials needed, an introduction, two activities, a conclusion, and formal, and informal assessments.

3. Write IEP goals and lesson plans.

Kendra E. had the bot write a generic IEP goal on writing for an 8th-grade student just to test it out, and reported good results. She was also able generate goals based on a curriculum using ChatGPT, and the bot even explained why they were SMART goals.

4. Set SMART goals.

Gayle Ann shared that you can have ChatGPT write SMART goals for you. When we prompted the bot to "write SMART goals for a second-grade teacher," the results included detailed percentages and broad timelines. The goals definitely needed more tweaking, but what ChatGPT provided was a great start, and better than working from a blank page.

5. Create text that is on individual student reading levels.

ChatGPT does a great job rewriting difficult texts. Rather than searching out or creating multiple versions of a text to accommodate various reading levels, use ChatGPT to generate alternative versions. This is useful for students who need simplified versions of text, and can also be used to challenge students who are reading above grade level. To do this, type "Rewrite the passage below for middle school students [insert text]" or "Rewrite the passage for a student struggling with difficult vocabulary."

6. Create differentiated reading passages appropriate for ESL students.

Sasha W. and Leah T. have used ChatGPT to write accessible passages for English as a Second Language (ESL learners). Simply copy/paste the text you need students to read and ask ChatGPT to "make this text accessible for ESL students" or "create a version of this text that is on a fifth-grade reading level."

7. Adapt high-level texts for your students' grade level so they can access primary source material.

Rather than searching out or creating multiple versions of a text to accommodate various reading levels, use ChatGPT to generate alternative versions. This is useful for introducing new literature from higher grade levels to students in lower grades, and also for primary source documents which are important references but often inaccessible for all but the most advanced readers. Stacy E. was able to get great results by asking ChatGpt for a second-grade reading level summary of a specific 11th-grade book.

8. Generate differentiated assessment questions and activities.

ChatGPT can successfully generate fill-in-the-blank sentences, analogies, and standard-specific comprehension questions. To do this, type "create a fill-in-the-blank activity based on the text below: [insert text below]". Or type, "Create a fill-in-the-blank vocabulary activity for the following words: [insert words]". For comprehension questions, you can type "Make a list of comprehension questions to test understanding of the following text: [insert text]".

9. Generate examples/non-examples.

Sometimes a big chunk of time for lesson planning goes into writing or finding examples. ChatGPT can save you time by generating a list of examples for you. Nicole G. was able to do this with figurative language examples. You can also ask ChatGPT to "give examples of non-figurative language that's often mistaken as figurative language." This will give you non-examples of figurative language (and what each one is mistaken for) and students can figure out which are which.

10. Generate sample essays and writing samples for students to analyze and assess.

One of the best ways to have students understand the components of high-quality writing is to have them analyze writing samples and discuss what works well and what doesn't. Traditionally, teachers have used the actual writing of former students for lack of a better option. Now, you can ask ChatGPT to write a good essay on the topic you want, and/or a poor essay on the topic you want. Some prompts you can try include: "Write a poorly written essay about [insert topic]" or "Write an essay about [insert topic] that lacks [insert quality]" or "Write a college-level essay about [insert topic] that shows [insert quality]." Show the various examples to students and have them talk about which ones work better and why.

11. Generate essential questions.

Emily S. asked the chatbot for an essential question that could be used to study the two texts she planned on using in her lesson. Not only did ChatGPT generate a good essential question, it automatically produced sub-questions for each of the two texts she was using and gave explanations of how each text could be used as evidence to respond to the questions.

12. Prepare FAQs.

This strategy was actually suggested by the bot itself! We asked ChatGPT how it can help teachers save time in lesson planning, and it responded by telling us about the FAQ generator. Ask ChatGPT to "provide answers to Frequently Asked Questions about [your topic.] You can then use this as a starting point for FAQ to provide students or parents/caregivers.

13. Create homework assignments.

After creating a lesson plan with GPT, you can ask it to generate a homework assignment based on that very lesson. See what the bot comes up with, then refine your search by prompting it to give "10 homework questions" or "3 short response questions" so you can get the exact number and type of activities you need.

How teachers are using ChatGPT to save time with instruction

1. Generate discussion prompts.

Looking for a way to jumpstart a discussion? ChatGPT can suggest creative discussion prompts for just about any lesson. You can easily make this a part of your lesson-planning stage with the bot. For example, you could type in "Create a list of discussion questions based on that lesson plan" after the bot is finished generating a lesson plan for you. Or you can type "Create a list of discussion questions for the lesson below" and copy/paste your lesson.

2. Teach writing and analysis with bot-generated exemplars, stories, and even poems.

ChatGPT can write any genre of text you need, and also does an excellent job of finding or generating exemplars. These two capabilities of the chatbot make it a great tool for teaching writing. Your students can observe how ChatGPT structures a story or essay based on your lesson, and use that as a guide for writing theirs. You can also have the chatbot analyze its own work (or another student's work) and have the students observe that process too.

3. Teach about artificial intelligence.

What better way to teach about the potential and limitations of technologies such as AI than by using the AI itself? Through teaching your students how to properly use ChatGPT and similar technology, you'll be able to demonstrate not only how it can help, but also make them aware of its limitations and how it to use it ethically. *Note: this should only be done if you have school/district permission to utilize AI with students, as there are currently many privacy compliance concerns with this.*

4. Simplify directions or re-word them so they're easier to understand.

If you're struggling to convey a procedure, instruction, or direction for students, you can use ChatGPT to help. This can be especially helpful if you need a simplified version for students who are new to the English Language or reading below grade level. To do this, type in "Simplify the following directions for [insert grade-level]: [insert directions]". Or "Create a 5-step instruction based on the following procedure. Use vocabulary appropriate for__ grade level."

5. Provide directions for using unfamiliar technology.

AI technologies like ChatGPT can be used to provide support to students who struggle with unfamiliar technology. In Tacoma, Washington, an [educator used ChatGPT to help students get on board with the learning management system (LMS) Canvas](). You can generate FAQ or step-by-step instructions in kid-friendly language for how to utilize tech tools, instead of directing students to lengthy help articles that are written for adults.

6. Create handouts and note-taking guides.

ChatGPT is excellent at synthesizing information. You can use it to summarize big bodies of content or text and also have it generate bullet points about them. That makes it a great tool for creating handouts and presentations for your classes. For example, you can type "Create a handout about climate change for fifth-grade students". You can further improve its scope by adding "Must include causes in bullet points". You can plan out your presentation using the same prompt, just replace "handout" with "presentation". When you do this, the bot will generate texts for slides which you can build upon and add images to.

How teachers are using ChatGPT to save time in assessment

1. Automate grading.

From quizzes to essays, ChatGPT can help you mark papers more quickly. You can either provide the bot with an answer key or a predefined grading system, and then ask it to analyze a student's work.

For quizzes, you can type "score the following students using this answer key: [copy/paste answer key]". In the same prompt, add "[Insert student name]:[their answers to the quiz].

For a multiple-choice quiz, provide the bot with the answer key and use a prompt like "Score the following students using this answer key [insert answer key]". In the same prompt, add "Students: [Insert student's name and their answers to the quiz]". The bot will respond with something like: "[Student's name]: 4/10.

ChatGPT itself suggested using it to automate grading by integrating it with an LMS integration via API, a plug-in, or custom codes, although these integrations are still new and in development. With time, we anticipate ChatGPT working seamlessly with other grading and assessment tools you already utilize.

2. Create quizzes and tests.

You can input a whole lesson or text into ChatGPT and have it create a quiz based on that. You can even specify the kind of quiz you need (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, etc.) and how many items you want. For example, you could type, "Create a multiple-choice quiz with 10 items to test student comprehension of the lesson below [copy/paste lesson].

3. Generate rubrics or marking schemes based on prior student work.

Rubrics are one of the most effective ways to assess student work but can be extremely time-consuming to create. ChatGPT can help! Just supply the bot with copy/pasted student work that you have graded in the past, their corresponding marks, and the rubrics or grading system that you used before. You can type, "Create a rubric based on the following graded work and grading system: [insert student's graded work]". In the same request, follow this with "Grading system used: [insert grading system]".

4. Generate rubrics without prior student work.

An alternative approach to the usage above is to simply instruct ChatGPT to write a rubric for a specific written assignment (or even an oral presentation, which Education Week has tried here). For example, type "Write a rubric for reflective writing for 6th graders." This can generate a 15-point rubric with 5 criteria, each one with a description, followed by a simple scoring system.

5. Find exemplars to help you analyze student writing.

ChatGPT is also excellent at pulling up exemplars of just about anything! Teacher Gwen D. has tried this for everything from essays to model answers to open-ended questions. If you're not sure what on-grade-level work should look like for project-based learning or another subjective assignment, you can type "Give examples of PBL assignments for [insert grade level]". This will generate a list of possible assignments. Then you can prompt the bot to "Can you create an outline for this PBL assignment: [insert one of the suggested assignments]". And follow it up with "Give an example of this completed assignment?"

6. Generate detailed student feedback.

Type out what you want to say, then tell ChatGPT, "Write this in a more professional tone" or "say this more nicely."

7. Provide more compliments and positive affirmations about what students are getting right in their work.

While it's important to give positive feedback on student work, typing everything out can take a lot of time, and many teachers find themselves taking shortcuts on the compliments. Copy/paste typed student work into ChatGPT, and ask it to analyze what a student got right and the positives about the writing/research. Use that commentary in your own typed feedback to students. Alternatively, you prompt ChatGPT to, "write a positive comment about good vocabulary use and grammar" or "write 2 sentences thanking a 7th-grade student for putting so much thought into their assignment."

Other ways ChatGPT is saving teachers time

1. Generate emails to families/parents.

Writing messages to caregivers can be extremely time-consuming, as it's important to strike the right tone and convey information accurately, professionally, and kindly. Whether you are writing to ask about a student's absence, announcing an upcoming school activity, or requesting assistance, you can ask the chatbot to write it for you. Kathy G. has used ChatGPT to word her email to a parent about disruptive behavior with good results!

2. Write newsletters, notices, bulletins, and other messages to families and colleagues.

ChatGPT can also write formal letters or generate templates for them. Just make sure to specify what you'd like the letter to include, the tone you want to use, and any other important details. While the results are not going to be perfectly worded all the time, they are usually enough to get you started in the right direction. You may be able to spend 10 minutes editing the letter rather than 45 minutes writing it yourself from scratch.

3. Generate well-worded class rules.

Likewise, ChatGPT can compile a list of rules for the classroom and word them appropriately for the grade level the rules are meant for. The initial result you get may be worded a bit mechanically and monotonously, but as always with ChatGPT, refine the prompt further to get better results. You can follow up with "add a rule about __ and word everything for middle-school kids."

4. Write Excel or Google Sheets formulas.

This may take some trial and error, especially if you're not familiar with the functions of Excel (you can ask the bot to explain it to you though!). When asking it to write a formula, be specific about what you want it to do (count, sum, match, look for, etc.) and in which columns you want it to look for the values.

5. Simplify meal planning.

Although this isn't specific to teachers, they've named this as one of their favorite time-saving uses of artificial intelligence! Because ChatGPT has scraped information from all over the web, you can expect it to know a ton of recipes! Just input the ingredients you plan on using, the ideal prep time, the specific diet you're following (if any), and even your allergies or anything you don't want your meals to include.

On top of recipes, it can also create a basic meal plan based on the number of your family and how much time you're willing to cook and prep. For example, you can type, "Create a five-day meal plan for a family of four with two children, in which the meals only take half an hour to prepare." The chatbot will generate a meal plan that's not too specific but easy enough to follow or at the very least, will give you ideas on what to make for each meal. You can always refine the prompt further "Don't include tacos" or "create a meal with the leftovers from the chicken dish."

4 easy ways to get started today

If you're not sure where to begin, choose one of these ideas as your first task for ChatGPT, and start experimenting with possibilities!

1. Differentiate text for below or above grade level readers: Copy/paste a reading passage into ChatGPT and type, "Create a version of this on a __ grade reading level."

2. Create a grade-level appropriate version of a primary source document or other important text that can be difficult for students to understand: Copy/paste the passage from the internet into ChatGPT and type, "Write this on a ___ grade reading level."

3. Generate lesson ideas: Type, "Give me a ___ grade lesson on ___". Look over the results, then type in what you wish was different, "Include a hands-on activity and quiz" or "the lesson needs to be for a sixty-minute class period."

4. Generate learning activities or games: Type, "Give me ten fun ways to teach two-digit addition to second graders." or "What activities can help seventh graders understand cause and effect?" or "Write the description of 5 games that kindergartners can play to help them learn letter sounds."

A final reminder

Keep your expectations of ChatGPT reasonable, and we think you'll find it's a game-changer!

Remember that ChatGPT will not create the perfect text for you on the first request, and will not take a task completely off your plate.

You will get the best results when you refine your prompt several times and help ChatGPT tweak what it's generated until it looks the way you want it. From there, be prepared to do your own personalization and editing.

The goal is to accelerate your workload: to accomplish a task in 10-15 minutes when it used to take you an hour. ChatGPT can make that possible!

Additional resources

• Monica Burns of Class Tech Tips shares 10 things teachers can do with ChatGPT to save time. You can also hear her speak about ChatGPT on our Truth for Teachers podcast.

• Matt Miller of Ditch That Textbook has the most comprehensive resource we've found on ChatGPT in the classroom. His guidelines focus on the ethics of artificial intelligence and how to use it with students.

• Teacher Evan Dunne has created this booklet which shares how ChatGPT can help teachers plan and deliver lessons.

A big thanks to followers of the Truth for Teachers Facebook page and members of the 40 Hour Teacher Workweek program who shared their experiences and allowed us to compile them for this resource! You can view a mega-thread of responses on the Facebook page and add to it yourself! 40 Hour members can read and contribute to the discussion in our our elementary group or secondary group.

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