

Citing ChatGPT and other Generative Artificial Intelligence Sources in APA, MLA, and IEEE

Check with your instructor before using ChatGPT or other generative AI tools as a research source to determine if their use is allowed for your assignment. If your instructor has a preferred method of citing this type of resource, please follow those guidelines.

You should cite ChatGPT or other AI tools if using them as a research source, whether you are paraphrasing or quoting content. If using the tools to edit or translate your work, indicate that in a note, or in your text.

As with all resources, evaluate the content critically for incorrect or biased information. This would also include evaluating the resources that the generative AI tool uses in its response to make sure that they are real, accurate and reliable.

It can take time for the major citation styles to determine how best to cite new resources, and there may be additional changes in the future. This content is accurate as of April 20, 2023.

The Library, Durham College and Ontario Tech University

APA Citation, 7th Edition

Information taken from the APA Style Blog, <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt> (April 20, 2023).

While sources that are non-retrievable to your readers are usually cited as personal communication, with ChatGPT and other AI-generated content there is no person communicating with you. As it is an algorithm's output, you would credit the author of the algorithm with an in-text citation and reference list entry.

Example of Quoted or Paraphrased AI Content:

When prompted with "Is the left brain right brain divide real or a metaphor?" the ChatGPT-generated text indicated that although the two brain hemispheres are somewhat specialized, "the notation that people can be characterized as 'left-brained' or 'right-brained' is considered to be an oversimplification and a popular myth" (OpenAI, 2023).

Using the parenthetical citation style, as above, you would include the source citation at the end of the sentence. Narrative citation style incorporates the source information as part of the sentence as shown below. You may choose to include long ChatGPT responses in an appendix, as in the example below.

According to a ChatGPT-generated response by OpenAI (2023) to a follow-up prompt of "What is a more accurate representation?", it noted that "different brain regions work together to support various cognitive processes" and "the functional specialization of different regions can change in response to experience and environmental factors" (see Appendix A for the full transcript).

Reference Entry:

OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 14 version) [Large language model].

<https://chat.openai.com/chat>

Following the computer software example in section 10.10 of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020), the reference list entry should include four elements: author, date, title, and source.

Author: The author of the AI model ChatGPT is OpenAI.

Date: The date is the year of the version you used. Following the computer software example in section 10.10 of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020), you only need to include the year, not the exact date. The version number provides the specific date information for your reader.

Title: The name of the model is “ChatGPT,” which is italicized in the reference entry. Although OpenAI has different versions of the AI (e.g. ChatGPT-4), they use “ChatGPT” as the general name.

Include the version number after the title in parenthesis. OpenAI uses the date as the version, so that is how you would write it. Other AI models might use a different numbering system – include the information however the publisher provides it.

In the Reference Entry example shown above, a source descriptor is included in square brackets after the title e.g. [Large language model]. This description is taken from the publisher and may vary based on the version or product. Source descriptor information is not included for common sources like books or journal articles, but should be included for sources that are not considered typical.

Source: As the publisher and author are the same, you do not need to repeat the publisher’s name after the title field. Include the URL for the resource. If a specific link to the information you used is available, give that URL; if not, use the general URL such as <https://chat.openai.com/chat>.

MLA Citation, 9th Edition

Information taken from the MLA Style website, <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/> (April 20, 2023).

Example of Paraphrased AI Content:

While the green light in *The Great Gatsby* might be said to chiefly symbolize four main things: optimism, the unattainability of the American dream, greed, and covetousness (“Describe the symbolism”), arguably the most important—the one that ties all four themes together—is greed.

Works Cited List Entry:

“Describe the symbolism of the green light in the book *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald” prompt. *ChatGPT*, 13 Feb. version, OpenAI, 8 Mar. 2023, chat.openai.com/chat.

Example of Quoted AI content:

When asked to describe the symbolism of the green light in *The Great Gatsby*, *ChatGPT* provided a summary about optimism, the unattainability of the American dream, greed, and covetousness. However, when further prompted to cite the source on which that summary was based, it noted that it lacked “the ability to conduct research or cite sources independently” but that it could “provide a list of scholarly sources related to the symbolism of the green light in *The Great Gatsby*” (“In 200 words”).

Works Cited List Entry:

“In 200 words, describe the symbolism of the green light in the book *The Great Gatsby*”
follow-up prompt to list sources. *ChatGPT*, 13 Feb. version, OpenAI, 9 Mar. 2023,
chat.openai.com/chat.

MLA uses a template of core elements for Works Cited entries. For AI tools, they are recommending that you fill in the following relevant template sections:

Author: Do not treat the AI tool as an author – leave this field blank. This recommendation follows the [policies](#) developed by various publishers, including the MLA’s journal *PMLA*.

Title of Source: Describe what was generated by the AI tool. This may involve including information about the prompt in the Title of Source element if you have not done so in the text.

Title of Container: Give the name of the AI tool (e.g. *ChatGPT*).

Version: Name the version of the AI tool as specifically as possible. For example, the examples used here were developed using *ChatGPT* 3.5, which assigns a specific date to the version, so the Version element shows this version date.

Publisher: Name the company that made the tool.

Date: Include the date the content was generated.

Location: Give the general URL for the tool. If the tool you are using creates a unique URL for each entry, use that instead.

IEEE Citation, 2022

Basic citation formats from IEEE Reference Guide (2022), available from:

<https://journals.ieeeauthorcenter.ieee.org/create-your-ieee-journal-article/create-the-text-of-your-article/ieee-editorial-style-manual/> (April 20, 2023).

Note that as of April 20, 2023, IEEE requires a citation for AI-generated text, but has not yet suggested a format to follow.

The IEEE Author Center, on its [Submission and Peer Review Policies](#) page, has published “Guidelines for Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Generated Text”:

“The use of artificial intelligence (AI)-generated text in an article shall be disclosed in the acknowledgements section of any paper submitted to an IEEE Conference or Periodical. The sections of the paper that use AI-generated text shall have a citation to the AI system used to generate the text.”

Two possible options for citing AI tools are to adapt the formats for:

- Private communication; or
- Software

Private communication

Many major STEM publishers have stated that generative AI tools such as ChatGPT cannot be credited as authors or co-authors of papers submitted for publication (“Tools such as ChatGPT”). Elsevier goes a step further, stating that authors should not “cite AI as an author” (“Publishing ethics”). Although using the citation format for private communication means identifying the AI tool or the company that developed it as the author, many sources are recommending this citation format at this time.

The basic format for an unpublished private communication is (IEEE, 2022, p. 19):

J.K. Author, private communication, Abbrev. Month, year.

Reference List Entry:

OpenAI, private communication, Apr. 2023.

OR

OpenAI’s ChatGPT, private communication, Apr. 2023.

Software

The basic format for software is (IEEE, 2022, p. 17):

J.K. Author. *Title of Software*. Date Repository or Archive. (version or year). Publisher Name. Accessed: Date (when applicable). [Type of medium]. Global Persistent Identifier. Available: site/path/file

Reference List Entry:

ChatGPT. (2023). OpenAI. Accessed: April 17, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://chat.openai.com>

Alternatively, the example above could include the version and/or a more specific medium.

Version: The version could be expressed as, for example: GPT-3.5 or Mar 23 version.

Medium: The medium could be expressed as [Large language model] as APA recommends, or another descriptive term.

Sources consulted for IEEE formatting:

Elsevier. (2023). *Publishing ethics*. Retrieved April 18, 2023, from <https://www.elsevier.com/about/policies/publishing-ethics#Authors>

IEEE. (2022). *IEEE reference guide*. Retrieved April 20, 2023, from http://journals.ieeeauthorcenter.ieee.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/IEEE_Reference_Guide.pdf

IEEE. *Submission and peer review policies*. (2023). Retrieved April 17, 2023, from <https://journals.ieeeauthorcenter.ieee.org/become-an-ieee-journal-author/publishing-ethics/guidelines-and-policies/submission-and-peer-review-policies/#ai-generated-text>
Tools such as ChatGPT threaten transparent science; here are our ground rules for their use. (2023). *Nature*, 613(7945), 612–612. doi: 10.1038/d41586-023-00191-1
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-00191-1>

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