HAWKES LEARNING

AI Literacy for College Students

Thinking Critically, Ethically, and Creatively with AI

Module 2:
AI and Information Literacy Tools

Evaluating AI-generated content is a necessary academic skill.

Information literacy means understanding where information comes from, and in an AI-driven world, how algorithms and AI may influence what you see as well as how to critically evaluate both human- and AI-generated content before accepting or sharing it.

Tools for Evaluating AI-Generated Information

Each tool listed offers a clear way to slow down, check, and verify AI outputs before relying on them in assignments.

1. Fact-Checking and Triangulation

Fact-checking aims to confirm claims using multiple reliable sources. The term *triangulation* comes from navigation, where three reference points are used to determine an accurate location.

How to use it with AI:

- Identify one factual claim from AI output.
- Verify it using at least two separate, reliable sources (textbooks, scholarly articles, reputable websites).

Example: AI claims, "Most college students learn better through visual learning methods." Check whether this claim is supported, or challenged, by educational research.

Takeaway: Something that sounds believable is not always true.

2. Verifying Citations and References

AI systems can "hallucinate" by generating information that appears credible but is actually incorrect, misleading, or made up, including research studies, statistics, citations, or references that sound legitimate but do not exist.

How to verify AI-generated research content:

- **Search for and confirm information using reliable sources.** Use search engines as a starting point to verify AI-generated claims, then confirm information through credible sources such as academic databases, library resources, peer-reviewed articles, or tools like Google Scholar.
- **Trace information back to original sources.** When AI provides citations, references, or summarizes research, confirm that the sources exist, are accurately represented, and support the claims being made.
- **Cross-check for accuracy and context.** Compare information across multiple sources to identify missing context, outdated information, oversimplifications, or potential bias before referencing it in academic work.

3. The SIFT Method

The SIFT method, developed by digital literacy expert Mike Caulfield, is a framework for evaluating online information by encouraging users to stop, investigate the source, find better coverage, and trace claims back to their original context before accepting or sharing information (Caulfield 2019).

- **Stop:** Pause before trusting or sharing AI output.
- **Investigate:** Identify the likely source of the information.
- **Find better coverage:** Search for confirmation from reliable sources.
- **Trace:** Follow statistics or quotes to their original context.

☑ Quick Steps

- ☐ **Search the exact quote or statistic.**
  Put it in quotation marks in a search engine and search for the original source.
- ☐ **Find the first credible publisher.**
  Who first published this information? Was it a research study, government report, or reputable news outlet?
- ☐ **Check the date.**
  Is the information current, or is it outdated? Is it being reused in a new context where it may no longer apply?
- ☐ **Read before and after the quoted section.**
  If it's a quote, read a few paragraphs before and after it. Was it taken out of context?
- ☐ **Examine how the data was gathered.**
  Who was studied? How large was the sample?

Example: AI summarizes a controversial health claim; use SIFT to verify details via medical journals.

- **S:** Write about how you stopped to evaluate the output.
- **I:** Where did the information come from?
- **F:** Where did you go to find reliable sources?
- **T:** What are the links or references tracing to the statistics or quotes?

4. The CRAAP Test

The CRAAP test, developed by librarian Sarah Blakeslee and colleagues at California State University, Chico, is a framework for evaluating the credibility of information sources by examining their currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose before using them in research (Blakeslee 2004).

- **Currency:** Is the information current?
- **Relevance:** Does it fit your topic or assignment?
- **Authority:** Who created it? What credentials, experiences, or achievements make this author an expert?
- **Accuracy:** Is it supported by evidence? Can you find at least two other reliable sources to verify the accuracy of the information?
- **Purpose:** Why was it created?

Example: AI generates a claim that social media improves mental health. Before using it, check when the source was published, whether it fits your topic, who created it, whether evidence supports the claim, and whether the source's purpose is to inform, persuade, or promote.

5. Bias and Perspective Checking

AI may focus on views from groups with more power or visibility while leaving out others.

How to check AI outputs for bias:

- **Spot which voices are included.**
  - Ask: Whose perspective is presented?
  - Who is missing or underrepresented?
- **Seek alternative perspectives.**
  - Search for sources from different cultures, communities, or scholarly groups.
  - Compare multiple viewpoints on the same topic.
- **Check for differences or omissions.**
  - What does AI include or leave out?
  - Are important perspectives missing, simplified, or misrepresented?

Example: AI summarizes a historical event. Cross-check with academic or international sources and notice what is explained differently or left out.

6. Evaluating AI-Generated Media (Images, Audio, Video)

AI can create increasingly realistic videos, images, and audio. It's important to verify AI-generated media and evaluate content critically rather than accepting it at face value.

How to evaluate AI-generated media:

- **Search for signs of manipulation or inconsistency.** Examine images, video, or audio for unusual details such as distorted text, inconsistent lighting or shadows, unnatural movement, mismatched reflections, visual artifacts, or audio that appears disconnected from context.
- **Check where the media originally appeared.** Search for the earliest available version of an image, video, or clip and determine whether it has been edited, reposted, cropped, or presented without important context.
- **Confirm authenticity using additional evidence.** Compare the media with trusted news sources, official accounts, reverse image search tools, or other independent sources to determine whether the content is authentic and accurately represented.

Example: You notice an image attached to a news story. Use reverse image search (e.g., Google Images or TinEye) to trace where it originated, compare how it appears across sources, and check whether it has been labeled as AI-generated or edited.

Try It

Practice Evaluating AI Output

- ☐ Choose a topic (e.g., sleep, social media, attendance policies).
- ☐ Generate an AI output about your topic; choose one of its claims to evaluate.
- ☐ Apply at least two evaluation strategies listed.
- ☐ Decide whether the claim is trustworthy, uncertain, or misleading, and explain why.