

# Beyond the Bots: Writing Support in the Age of AI




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## Raise Your Hand if You Use AI at Work or Home






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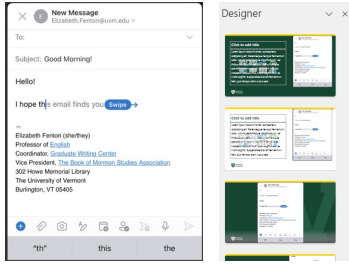

## Raise Your Hand if You Use AI at Work or Home

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## We Don't Always "See" the GenAI Around Us

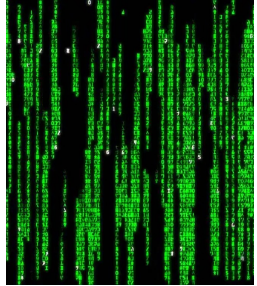

**Example:**  
When Liz was making this slide about the predictive text feature embedded in her phone's email app, PowerPoint offered several design choices that worked with UVM's templates.

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## How Does GenAI Work?



- GenAI relies on large language models (LLMs)—a type of trained machine learning that finds patterns in massive amounts of textual input taken from the internet and predicts sequences of words.
- LLMs vacuum up text from as many sources as possible and deploy predictive algorithms to generate "new" sentences that follow grammatical and mechanical conventions.
- The result is typically clear, correct language...often devoid of personality.
- Despite the coherence of their sentences, LLMs are vulnerable to "hallucinations," presentations of factually inaccurate material or grammatically correct nonsense.
- They also make users vulnerable to plagiarism, because they can drop pre-existing work into their texts whole-cloth without citation.
- Like many digital tools, GenAI offers both benefits and drawbacks.

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## What Does GenAI Have to do with Writing Centers?



- GenAI is sometimes described as a potential replacement for human student support.
- In the Writing Centers, we believe GenAI cannot replace the work of peer-to-peer learning.
- However, this does not mean that there is no place for GenAI in the Writing Center.
- Writing Centers can play a role in helping students:
  - Develop metacognitive awareness of their writing processes
  - Build flexible writing strategies
  - Shape rhetorical awareness
  - Improve citation practices
  - Learn to use AI tools ethically

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## Gen AI and Writers: Uses



- A starting point or prompt generator
- A grammar assistant
- A translation aid
- An editing tool for specific challenges
- A boilerplate language generator

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## GenAI and Writing Tutors: What We Train Them To Do

- **Follow** instructor guidelines and policies related to GenAI
- **Approach** GenAI tools as both/and (potentially useful and potentially problematic) rather than as either/or
- **Listen** when writers explain why and how they have used GenAI
- **Ask** writers to explain their understanding of the tools' benefits and limitations
- **Encourage** writers to consider their audiences and rhetorical situations and to exercise agency in their writing
- **Model** critical thinking for writers around GenAI tools
- **Remind** writers that humans can do things LLMs cannot:
  - respond flexibly to different rhetorical situations
  - recognize "hallucinations" and correct errors in logic or reasoning
  - scaffold instructions and arguments
  - listen actively and respond specifically
  - consider audience, context, meaning
  - incorporate nuance, humor, and even contradiction





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## Connecting Students to the Writing Centers

- Point them to our websites or encourage them to drop in.
- Walk them through registering for an account in our system.
- Talk about the value of peer-to-peer support for **all** writers.
- Explain that we build accessibility into our services:
  - in-person & online services
  - a space packed with resources for all learners
  - Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach
  - guides to genres, citation styles, common challenges.
- Recommend potential tutors and consultants!

<https://www.uvm.edu/undergradwriting>      <https://www.uvm.edu/gradwriting>



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