

How to cite ChatGPT



By [Timothy McAdoo](#) Last updated: February 23, 2024 Date created: April 7, 2023 7 min read 55 Comments

References

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We, the APA Style team, are not robots. We can all pass a [CAPTCHA test](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CAPTCHA) (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CAPTCHA>) , and we know our roles in a [Turing test](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turing_test) (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turing_test) . And, like so many nonrobot human beings this year, we've spent a fair amount of time reading, learning, and thinking about issues related to



feedback about the use and citation of ChatGPT. Thank you to everyone who has contributed and shared ideas, opinions, research, and feedback.

In this post, I discuss situations where students and researchers use ChatGPT to create text and to facilitate their research, not to write the full text of their paper or manuscript. We know [instructors have differing opinions](https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/06/chatgpt-learning-tool) (<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2023/06/chatgpt-learning-tool>) about how or even whether students should use ChatGPT, and we'll be continuing to collect feedback about instructor and student questions. As always, defer to instructor guidelines when writing student papers. For more about guidelines and policies about student and author use of ChatGPT, see the last section of this post.

Quoting or reproducing the text created by ChatGPT in your paper

If you've used ChatGPT or other AI tools in your research, describe how you used the tool in your Method section or in a comparable section of your paper. For literature reviews or other types of essays or response or reaction papers, you might describe how you used the tool in your introduction. In your text, provide the prompt you used and then any portion of the relevant text that was generated in response.

Unfortunately, the results of a ChatGPT "chat" are not retrievable by other readers, and although nonretrievable data or quotations in APA Style papers are usually cited as [personal communications](/style-grammar-guidelines/citations/personal-communications) (</style-grammar-guidelines/citations/personal-communications>) , with ChatGPT-generated text there is no person communicating. Quoting ChatGPT's text from a chat session is therefore more like sharing an algorithm's output; thus, credit the author of the algorithm with a reference list entry and the corresponding in-text citation.

Example:

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).

Reference

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

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

You may also put the full text of long responses from ChatGPT in an appendix of your paper or in online supplemental materials, so readers have access to the exact text that was generated. It is particularly important to document the exact text created because ChatGPT will generate a unique response in each chat session, even if given the same prompt. If you create appendices or supplemental materials, remember that each should be called out at least once in the body of your APA Style paper.

Example:

When given a follow-up prompt of “What is a more accurate representation?” the ChatGPT-generated text indicated 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” (OpenAI, 2023; see Appendix A for the full transcript).

Reference

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

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

Creating a reference to ChatGPT or other AI models and software

The in-text citations and references above are adapted from the reference template for software in Section 10.10 of the *Publication Manual* (American Psychological Association, 2020, Chapter 10). Although here we focus on ChatGPT, because these guidelines are based on the software template, they can be adapted to note the use of other large language models (e.g., Bard), algorithms, and similar software.

The reference and in-text citations for ChatGPT are formatted as follows:

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

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

- **Parenthetical citation:** (OpenAI, 2023)
- **Narrative citation:** OpenAI (2023)

Let's break that reference down and look at the four elements (author, date, title, and source):

Author: The author of the model is OpenAI.

Date: The date is the year of the version you used. Following the template in Section 10.10, you need to include only the year, not the exact date. The version number provides the specific date information a reader might need.

Title: The name of the model is “ChatGPT,” so that serves as the title and is italicized in your reference, as shown in the template. Although OpenAI labels unique iterations (i.e., ChatGPT-3, ChatGPT-4), they are using “ChatGPT” as the general name of the model, with updates identified with version numbers.

The version number is included after the title in parentheses. The format for the version number in ChatGPT references includes the date because that is how OpenAI is labeling the versions. Different large language models or software might use different version numbering; use the version number in the format the author or publisher provides, which may be a numbering system (e.g., Version 2.0) or other methods.

Bracketed text (/blog/parentheses-brackets) is used in references for additional descriptions when they are needed to help a reader understand what’s being cited. References for a number of common sources, such as journal articles and books, do not include bracketed descriptions, but things outside of the typical peer-reviewed system often do. In the case of a reference for ChatGPT, provide the descriptor “Large language model” in square brackets. OpenAI describes ChatGPT-4 as a “large multimodal model,” so that description may be provided instead if you are using ChatGPT-4. Later versions and software or models from other companies may need different descriptions, based on how the publishers describe the model. The goal of the bracketed text is to briefly describe the kind of model to your reader.

Source: When the publisher name and the author name are the same, do not repeat the publisher name in the source element of the reference, and move directly to the URL. This is the case for ChatGPT. The URL for ChatGPT is <https://chat.openai.com/chat> (<https://chat.openai.com/chat>). For other models or products for which you may create a reference, use the URL that links as directly as possible to the source (i.e., the page where you can access the model, not the publisher’s homepage).

Other questions about citing ChatGPT

You may have noticed the confidence with which ChatGPT described the ideas of brain lateralization and how the brain operates, without citing any sources. I asked for a list of sources to support those claims and ChatGPT provided five references—four of which I was able to find online. The fifth does not seem to be a real article; the digital object identifier given for that reference belongs to a different article, and I was not able to find any article with the authors, date, title, and source details that ChatGPT provided. Authors using ChatGPT or similar AI tools for research should consider making this scrutiny of the primary sources a standard process. If the sources are real, accurate, and relevant, it may be better to read those original sources to learn from that research and paraphrase or quote from those articles, as applicable, than to use the model’s interpretation of them.

We’ve also received a number of other questions about ChatGPT. Should students be

allowed to use it? What guidelines should instructors create for students using AI? Does using AI-generated text constitute plagiarism? Should authors who use ChatGPT credit ChatGPT or OpenAI in their byline? What are the [copyright implications](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/03/16/2023-05321/copyright-registration-guidance-works-containing-material-generated-by-artificial-intelligence) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/03/16/2023-05321/copyright-registration-guidance-works-containing-material-generated-by-artificial-intelligence>) ?

On these questions, researchers, editors, instructors, and others are actively debating and creating parameters and guidelines. Many of you have sent us feedback, and we encourage you to continue to do so in the comments below. We will also study the policies and procedures being established by instructors, publishers, and academic institutions, with a goal of creating guidelines that reflect the many real-world applications of AI-generated text.

For questions about manuscript byline credit, plagiarism, and related ChatGPT and AI topics, the APA Style team is seeking the recommendations of APA Journals editors. APA Style guidelines based on those recommendations will be posted on this blog and on the APA Style site later this year.

Update: APA Journals has published [policies on the use of generative AI in scholarly materials](https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/resources/publishing-policies?tab=4) (<https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/resources/publishing-policies?tab=4>).

We, the APA Style team humans, appreciate your patience as we navigate these unique challenges and new ways of thinking about how authors, researchers, and students learn, write, and work with new technologies.

Reference

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>

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