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Checklist for using AI responsibly

When you use a generative AI tool, you're in the driver's seat. The tool provides computational power, but you provide direction, judgment, and critical thinking. Using AI responsibly means being thoughtful and intentional with your prompts to ensure the quality, safety, and accuracy of the outputs.

This reading provides a set of key practices to help you make responsible choices each time you use AI.

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Principles of responsible AI use

Applying the following four principles helps you use AI tools both responsibly and effectively.

1. Be clear and specific in your prompts

Vague or ambiguous prompts can lead to generic outputs. The more specific you are in your instructions, the more you guide the AI tool away from unhelpful assumptions and toward the nuanced output you actually want. Being specific is a key part of using AI responsibly.

2. Protect sensitive information

This is a crucial responsibility for every AI user. Public AI tools are not the place for personal, confidential, or sensitive data. Before entering any prompt, it's a good idea to pause and ask yourself: *Am I including data in my prompt that someone else might expect me to keep private?*

Here are a few practical ways to protect sensitive information when prompting:

- Use placeholders by referring to people, projects, or places with generic names.

- Frame prompts around the task you need done, not the people involved.

- Input only relevant context needed to complete the task, rather than entire documents.