



BEST PRACTICES FOR USING AI IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools can serve as a resource in career development. However, ChatGPT, Google Bard, and other such tools have limitations and should be used with caution. For example, in Summer 2023, an employer alerted UMD's University Career Center that they received approximately 60 nearly-identical cover letters for a job posting. It was determined that these letters were formulated by AI. To avoid such scenarios, please see some important guidelines outlined below.

General Guidelines

- Avoid copying/pasting results from AI-generated content.** While this content can be used to brainstorm or begin a project, it is necessary to customize the final product and write all of your content in your own voice.
- Protect your privacy.** Pasting information to AI tools is equal to posting information online publicly. Never include sensitive data in your prompts to AI; this includes information that might pertain to your work.
- Beware AI Hallucination:** Proofread content carefully to ascertain if AI has invented false information.

Quick Tips for Using AI (based on our testing)

- Company Research:** We encourage you to leverage AI when searching for companies in specific industries or companies hiring for specific job types, as well finding companies who are seeking a specific major or who are hiring in certain locations. It could also be used to learn more about specific organizations, as AI can scan for and summarize large amounts of data effectively.
- Skills Assessment:** You may want to use AI to scan job descriptions and see what key skills it recommends focusing on throughout your application process.
- Interview Preparation:** Some have reported that AI-generated questions have been helpful in preparing for behavioral and technical interviews.
- Drafting Written Materials:** While we do not recommend using AI to write your career development materials, if you are going to do so, we only advise using it to draft your content. You must customize every product to reflect your authentic voice. Here are some notes about particular cases:
 - **LinkedIn Summary:** Ensure you provide enough details to make your summary unique and reflective of your personal voice. However, again, please remember to abstain from sharing private info.
 - **Connection Invitations/Thank You Notes:** We advise against using AI to craft brief and personal notes as they affect the authenticity of the messages.
 - **Elevator Pitch:** AI might limit the sincerity and natural tone of this important statement. As each elevator pitch should be customized for a particular company, it might also provide incorrect context.
 - **Cover Letters/Resumes:** AI has generated vague and generic language/examples for these vital documents.
Be sure to review anything drafted by AI and add as much specificity and metrics as possible to differentiate your final materials.
 - **Proofreading:** AI is not particularly effective in catching glaring errors or otherwise improving upon text.

USING AI IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Can I use AI to build my resume?

ECS advises against using AI when crafting your resume. Results are typically generic/vague and sometimes inconsistent/inaccurate. If you are considering using AI to get started in the process of resume writing or to tailor your resume to a specific job description, see these sample prompts. Remember to never include personal information in your prompts. While you should not use AI to build your entire resume, it can be a helpful tool in identifying key pieces of information that will aid you in customizing your resume to a job.

Sample Prompts:

Prompt 1: Pinpoint the most relevant skills from this job description: [paste job description]

Prompt 2: Based on the job description I will provide, what are 5 keywords a recruiter may screen my resume my for? Here is the job description: [paste job description]

Prompt:

Response:

In my consulting program QUEST, a project we did was consulting for the Division Student Affairs to answer why students are not engaging with mental health resources on campus and ways to increase engagement. We were able to make a wireframe that outlines an improved version of their website that highlight these sources and presented them to our client. Can you make 2 to 4 bullet points starting with action verbs describing what I did in QUEST for my resume?

Sure, here are some bullet points for your resume:

- Conducted comprehensive research and analysis to identify barriers preventing student engagement with campus mental health resources.
- Collaborated with the Division of Student Affairs to create a strategic plan for increasing student interaction with available support services.
- Created and presented a detailed wireframe for an improved Student Affairs website, emphasizing accessible mental health resources to boost student engagement.

PLEASE NOTE:

Once you have generated potential bullets using AI, it is **important** to proofread and refine them to include any critical details, metrics, or keywords. In the example above, you could indicate how many barriers you identified in your research or what percentage of students you aimed to engage. For other experiences, you can mention how many people you worked with; whether you won an award; or other accomplishments.

Here are some examples of revised bullets:

- Conducted qualitative research and analysis of 500 survey responses to identify 3 major barriers preventing student engagement with campus mental health resources.
- Collaborated with the Division of Student Affairs to create a 20 page strategic plan for increasing student interaction with available support services over a two year period.
- Created and presented a detailed wireframe for an improved Student Affairs website, emphasizing accessible mental health resources, expected to boost student engagement by 10%.

USING AI IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

WARNING: US Department of State Guide on Using AI for Applications:

The U.S. Department of State has released guidelines on the use of AI to assist in drafting application and assessment responses. They prohibit candidates from plagiarizing any portion of their application in which candidates must provide a narrative response. This means that potential candidates are prohibited from using any AI tool, including ChatGPT, to aid in writing written responses. Should use of AI be detected and the candidate is found to have used an AI tool, then that candidate will no longer be considered for that role.

Copied from: shorturl.at/E7ICA

Can I use AI to Prepare for the Career Fair?

While you can use AI, we ask that you exercise caution when doing so. This will ensure that everything comes from your genuine professional voice and sounds authentic.

AI Do's:

- Conduct research on organizations attending the fair that you are especially interested in. Much like when preparing for an interview, find out more information about the company, what their mission is, any projects they are working on, and anything about the organization you find interesting.
- Use AI to brainstorm questions you could ask the company or that the company could ask you.

Sample Prompt:

"If I am talking to an engineering recruiter at a career fair, what is a good elevator pitch for a sophomore in Aerospace engineering looking for an internship with GE Aerospace?"

Sample Result:

"Hi, I'm Testudo, a sophomore majoring in Aerospace Engineering. I've developed a strong foundation in aerodynamics, propulsion, and materials science. I'm passionate about advancing aerospace technology and am eager to apply my skills in a practical setting. My academic projects have honed my problem-solving abilities, and I'm excited about the opportunity to contribute to GE Aerospace's innovative projects. I'm particularly interested in your work on sustainable aviation and would love to discuss how I can contribute to your team's success."

Note:

This result lacks personal/project details. It leaves a lot of questions, such as where and when did you develop a strong foundation in the skills mentioned; which projects allowed you to hone problem solving skills; and are you really interested in sustainable aviation specifically, or is AI simply making that up? As you can see, this pitch leaves a lot to be desired and requires significant revision.

USING AI IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

To best leverage AI for interview preparation, see these important notes.

To ensure you have the most current and relevant company information, the company website should ALWAYS be the first resource for conducting company research. Use the company website to gather:

- A general overview of the organization
- Their mission and values
- Their notable projects
- A general understanding of roles they offer and current job openings

If you use AI to help you with company research, understand you may receive outdated information.

Appropriate Usage

1. Ask AI to summarize the work a company does as a starting point for your company research.

A potential use for using AI to conduct company research might be copying each webpage into your prompt and asking AI to summarize the webpages for you. Still, we encourage you to peruse the original webpages yourself to ensure accuracy. The more specific information you reference throughout the job application process, the better.

PROMPT: Give me an overview of the engineering work conducted at XYZ Company based on these webpages. (Provide webpages)

2. Prepare for specific questions the company may ask you about their organization.

PROMPT: Develop 5 potential interview questions I could be asked based on the provided missions and values page for this organization. (Provide webpage)

3. Prepare for specific questions based on a job description.

PROMPT: Generate 5 behavioral interview questions and 5 technical interview questions based on the job description I will provide. (Provide description)

4. You may want to have AI help you prepare for common interview questions by typing out your potential answers to questions such as:

- Why do you want to work at this company?
- Which of our values resonates with you the most?

AI can review your answers and provide you with helpful feedback.

USING AI FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Can I use AI to write Thank You Notes?

We advise against using AI to write thank you notes. AI generated content can sound less genuine. Write notes yourself so you can recall names, topics discussed, and any key details from the meeting.

Can I use AI in my job search?

One of the best places to use AI is for your job search. Here are some sample prompts:

- Generate a list of companies to apply to manufacturing engineering internships in the Virginia, Maryland, and Washington D.C. area.
- What are some common entry-level positions for mechanical engineering majors in Maryland?
- List the biggest robotics companies in Maryland.

Can I use AI for help with salary negotiation?

Salary offers are based on industry standards, location, your experience, education level, and the skills you bring to the position. It's best to discuss offers with a Career Advisor, as they can provide nuanced advice.

However, you can also use the tools available on our website and consult AI resources before speaking with ECS.

- Sample Prompt: Using current data from salary.com and Glassdoor, what are the average salaries for mechanical engineers in Miami, Florida?
- Attend a salary negotiation workshop: eng.umd.edu/careers/students/workshops
- See our handout: go.umd.edu/ecssalary23

Can I use AI to optimize my LinkedIn profile?

While AI can be used in the process of optimizing your LinkedIn profile to use as your professional networking site, there are some things you should keep in consideration.

- Use it for idea generation for different sections of your LinkedIn, but not the final product. Some appropriate sections to use AI are your headline or Summary/About sections.
- AI can help you pull technical skills and stories together to optimize your profile.
- Make sure you are reflecting your authentic voice and personality in a professional manner.
- Always proofread anything AI generated for accuracy and potential hallucination by the generator.
- DO NOT use AI to write messages to recruiters; keep those personal and written from your own voice.

We've provided a sample on the next page.

USING AI IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

AI Sample of LinkedIn Summary (About section)

Prompt Entered:

Make a compelling LinkedIn summary using the following elements.

Name: Testudo

Graduation Date: Spring 2024

Major: Civil Engineering

Interests: Public infrastructure, environmentally safe solutions

Personal story/passion: I've always played with building block as a child, an interest that has only grown as I have continued through my academic career

Insights from past experiences: Interned at Whiting-Turner, responsible for budgeting and had experience on-site working in a team

Skills & Keywords: Budgeting, teamwork, call to action, opening door to connections

Chat GPT Result:

As a Civil Engineering student graduating in Spring 2024, I've always had a passion for building and creating. From playing with building blocks as a child to pursuing an academic career dedicated to public infrastructure and environmentally safe solutions, my fascination with the field has only grown.

During my internship at Whiting-Turner, I gained invaluable experience in budgeting and on-site teamwork, which has equipped me with practical skills and insights into the industry. I thrive in collaborative environments and am committed to developing sustainable solutions that positively impact our communities.

With a strong foundation in budgeting and teamwork, I am eager to connect with professional and organizations who share my passion for innovative infrastructure and sustainability. Let's connect and explore opportunities to build a better future together!

Edited Text:

Hello! I'm a Civil Engineering student (with a sustainable studies minor) graduating in May '24. While my interest in engineering started with building blocks as a child, I've now dedicated myself to building a career in public infrastructure that centers green initiatives.

For example, as an intern at Whiting-Turner, I learned key industry skills. I assisted with monthly budget reports and reviewed 20 bid packages from subcontractors. Being on-site, I was also able to learn about different types of environmentally safe building methods that were being implemented on the project, such as mass timber and prefabrication.

Collaboration with project engineers and project managers is something I really enjoy, so I am eager to meet colleagues with whom I can grow professionally. Let's connect and work together to build a sustainable future!

For more guidance on AI use and other career development topics, please visit our website at eng.umd.edu/careers