

What Counts as Generative AI? *A student guide*

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) refers to digital tools that can create, rewrite, summarize, analyze, or transform content—including text, images, audio, code, or data—based on prompts provided by a user. These tools do not simply store information; they *generate new output* by predicting patterns from large datasets.

Common Examples of GenAI Use

The following activities generally count as GenAI use:

- Generating whole paragraphs, essays, discussion posts, lab reports, or reflections
- Rewriting, paraphrasing, or significantly editing your work using AI-generated suggestions
- Producing outlines, drafts, thesis statements, research questions, or arguments
- Summarizing readings, articles, or lecture materials using an AI tool
- Providing feedback on your writing or suggesting revisions
- Generating code, equations, data interpretations, images, or presentations

Common GenAI Tools Students May Use

Some generative AI tools are obvious and widely discussed, while others are less visible or embedded in apps students may already use. All of the tools below are considered GenAI when used to generate, explain, solve, or rewrite content.

Well-Known GenAI Tools

These tools are explicitly designed to generate text, answers, or content:

- ChatGPT
- Microsoft Copilot
- Google Gemini
- Claude
- Perplexity

Embedded GenAI Tools

These tools may feel like “study help” or productivity apps but still use generative AI to create or explain content:

- Photomath or Mathway
- Wolfram Alpha when used for explanation or interpretation, not just calculation
- Grammarly's AI rewrite, paraphrase, or idea generation features
- QuillBot or similar paraphrasing tools
- AI-powered summarization tools built into browsers or PDFs
- Study tools that generate explanations, flashcards, or practice questions using AI (e.g., Scholarcy)

What Typically Does Not Count as GenAI

Some digital tools are commonly used for learning and accessibility and are *not* considered GenAI when used as intended. These include:

- Spell check and grammar tools that suggest minor corrections (e.g., basic word processing features)
- Citation managers (e.g., Zotero, EndNote, Mendeley)
- Learning management systems (e.g., Blackboard, Canvas)
- Screen readers, captioning tools, or text-to-speech software used for accessibility
- Calculators or statistical software used without AI-driven interpretation or generation
- Generative AI search engines (e.g. Google)

Clarifying AI Use Expectations in Coursework

Different courses and assignments may allow, limit, or require GenAI use. Your instructor will specify what level of GenAI use is permitted for each assignment. Always follow the instructions provided in the syllabus and assignment directions.

If GenAI use is allowed, you may be required to disclose how you used it. If GenAI use is restricted or prohibited, using it without permission may be treated as a violation of SIUE academic integrity expectations and the student code of conduct. When in Doubt, ask your instructor before submitting your work. Transparency and clarification are always better than assumptions.