

1L ChatGPT Orientation

Fall 2025

You have ChatGPT EDU ... now what?

Thinking about ChatGPT as a 1L

Your primary task as a 1L is to develop **your** legal reasoning skills.

Generative AI can support your learning, but it **cannot** replace the work of thinking, analyzing, and writing as a lawyer.

Approach all AI tools with attention, mindfulness, and skepticism. Use it **thoughtfully** and **intentionally**, not as a shortcut.

Your professors may have specific instructions, suggestions, or limitations on how you use AI. **Always be careful to follow these, and ask questions if you're uncertain.**

The Legal Practice Skills program will give you more specific training and use cases later this term.

How Generative AI (ChatGPT) Works

ChatGPT and other Large Language Models (LLMs) are **predictive tools**.

They generate the most likely next word based on patterns in data they are trained on and the prompts you provide.

They do not “know” facts. They do not reason.

Their outputs may be fluent and persuasive, but they **simulate** knowledge and reasoning rather than perform it.

This explains why they sometimes (often?) produce confident mistakes, or “hallucinations.”

Understand the Risks of AI Use

Hallucinations: AI may distort legal rules or outright invent cases or statutory language. Even “legal” AI tools are still remarkably weak here. AI is not a search tool.

Overreliance: Until you know what the “right” answers should be, or what “good” analysis looks like, you are at extreme risk of being led astray or — worse — not building your own lawyerly skills.

Bias: All AI tools reflect their training data, which include bias, incorrect assumptions, and inaccurate information. Be skeptical and thoughtful.

Integrity concerns: Misrepresenting AI output as your own, failing to verify AI-generated output, or not following your instructors’ AI guidelines can raise academic integrity issues.

Where AI Tools Excel for 1Ls

AI is most useful to you now as a **study assistant**. *(There are specific use cases you will be taught in the LPS program later this term and next.)*

It can generate text in different writing styles, summarize or paraphrase material, and help you organize notes and outlines.

It can turn your notes or other materials into flashcards, practice questions, or self-quizzes.

It can also help you brainstorm ideas, suggest alternative framings, and refine your writing for clarity, grammar, and tone.

Where AI Falls Short

AI should **never** be trusted for fact retrieval, such as case names, holdings, or statutory language. (You will learn how to use better tools for this.)

AI is notoriously unreliable for citation accuracy, “Bluebook” rules formatting, or strict doctrinal applications.

Perhaps most importantly, it cannot provide sophisticated legal reasoning or analysis—the core skills you are expected to master.

Be aware that very long chats may also cause AI to forget instructions or drift from task.

Best Practices

Use AI intentionally, within clear parameters.

Use the “**human–AI–human**” technique: begin with your own reasoning, use AI to help refine/reformat/adapt it, then critically review the output.

Only use AI for tasks where you have a pretty good idea of what a correct/good answer should look like. (For example, always read and brief cases yourself before consulting AI.)

If AI output starts to drift, start a fresh session.

Good Prompting is an Essential AI Skill

Getting good results from AI use depends almost entirely on how you ask.

Be specific and detailed; vague prompts yield vague and unhelpful output.

Provide the context and your goals, and where possible give the AI examples of strong output.

Break complex requests into multiple steps.

Assigning the AI a role (“senior associate” or “law professor”) is often very helpful.

Be specific about how you want the format — tables, outlines — and specify the length.

Iterate your prompts - keep asking until you get the output you want. (Caution: especially long conversations can cause the AI to hallucinate more often.)

A Few Suggested Use Cases

Summarize or organize your class notes into outlines.

Convert handwritten or audio notes into nicely structured study materials.

Create quizzes or flashcards from your notes.

Brainstorm writing strategies, and polish your prose.

In all cases, you must verify accuracy and ensure the meaning has not shifted.

Takeaway Points

Generative AI can be a valuable tool, but it is not a substitute for legal reasoning.

The value of AI to your learning depends on your ability to use it well and supervise it critically.

Use it to enhance, not avoid, your own work.

Always check individual syllabi and follow professor-specific guidance on AI use.

More Help?

<https://www.law.upenn.edu/its/docs/ai/chatgpt-for-students/>

