

## CHATGPT AND AI IN THE CLASSROOM: A FRIEND, NOT A SUBSTITUTE

by:

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In recent years, classrooms around the world have experienced a sudden shift with the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT. For many students, especially those balancing multiple deadlines, AI has become an academic shortcut that saves both time and effort. It provides instant answers, polished drafts, and even quick grammar corrections. Yet, its growing presence has sparked an important conversation among educators: how can students use AI without losing the very skills education is meant to build?

In the Philippines, reports show that secondary and college students are beginning to rely heavily on AI for their schoolwork. Evangelista (2025) noted that while some learners used AI responsibly for idea generation and grammar support, others admitted to submitting AI-generated content as their own. Such practices reveal both the adaptability and the vulnerability of students. They are resourceful enough to explore new tools, yet their dependence also exposes gaps in their understanding of originality, authorship, and critical thinking. The issue lies not simply in the use of AI, but in how students choose to engage with it.

International studies reflect similar patterns. Abbas (2024), in a study of Asian universities, found that students who relied too much on ChatGPT showed weaker development in argumentation and organization skills compared to peers who used it only as a reference. In the United States, Lee et al. (2024) surveyed high school students and discovered that while many found AI helpful, a large number admitted they used it to avoid the harder work of brainstorming

and revising. These studies suggest that while AI can support learning, overreliance may weaken essential academic skills such as critical analysis, synthesis, and creative expression.

English teachers, therefore, face the challenge of reframing AI as a learning partner rather than a replacement. ChatGPT can be introduced in classrooms as a vocabulary builder, paraphrasing aid, or grammar checker. Students can be encouraged to analyze AI-generated responses, revise them in their own words, and reflect on the process. This way, learners maintain ownership of their work while benefiting from the efficiency AI provides. Some teachers in the Philippines already require reflective journals where students document how they used AI, what they asked, and how they edited the drafts. Practices like these make the learning process more transparent and accountable.

At the institutional level, schools in the Philippines are beginning to respond as well. Some are revising their academic honesty guidelines to include AI use, while others are shifting toward performance-based assessments such as oral defenses, portfolios, and in-class writing tasks. These methods emphasize authentic learning and make it harder for students to rely solely on AI. International recommendations also stress redesigning assessments so that they capture students' original reasoning and voices rather than polished outputs alone.

AI is here to stay, not only in schools but also in workplaces and everyday life. Banning it outright may be unrealistic but guiding students to use it wisely is both possible and necessary. By teaching learners to treat AI as a helper rather than a crutch, educators can preserve the value of hard-earned skills like critical reading, reflective writing, and analytical thinking. The goal is not to stop students from using AI but to prepare them to engage with it ethically and thoughtfully. When balanced correctly, AI can enrich the classroom—not by replacing human effort, but by supporting it.

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