

Critical Evaluation

Evaluating AI Tools

This checklist is a resource to help you think critically and support you in making judgements about which AI tools to use. The technology is developing rapidly, with new tools appearing for free or through a subscription, every day. Before creating an account with a tool or using it within your studies you will need to judge whether it is a tool you will be able to use ethically, responsibly and with confidence that your personal information will be protected.

To help you do this, we can use the ROBOT checklist.

Reliability

- How reliable is the information available about the AI technology itself? What information is shared about the app or on the website about when the tool was released, when it was last updated, the aim or mission?
- Are terms and conditions, copyright or privacy policies available for you to read? Are you happy with how your personal data will be used?
- Is there a way to contact the developer or company creating the tool?
- How much information is made available about how the tool works? Is information only partially available due to trade secrets?
- Are you able to identify what sources were used in its creation or the dataset generative AI is drawing on? What impact does this have on the reliability of the tool?
- How biased is the information that the tool produces?

Something to think about

AI tools are developing rapidly, and many appear to be released at an early stage of development or for beta testing. This can impact on the reliability and usability of the tool, and you may find there are a lot of bugs. We can expect that tools will continue to improve as they are developed further. A key critical question throughout is whether you are comfortable signing up to use the tool. Are you confident following your evaluation that the tool itself is reliable, drawing on authoritative sources and will protect your personal data without misuse.

Objective

- What is the goal or objective of the tool?
- What is the goal of sharing information about the tool or making it available to use? To inform or persuade potential users? To add to the dataset teaching the tool? To find financial backing?

Something to think about

Whenever you engage with a new tool, take some time to find out more about the app or look around the webpage for information and links that will assist you in making judgements. Links such as about us, meet the team, our aims, terms and conditions, policies and contact us, will allow you to find out more about the tool itself. Tools that are released for use with transparency about their purpose and potential use will potentially be more trustworthy than those that lack openness.

Bias

- What could create bias in the AI technology? Is there information about how the tool has been built or the dataset it draws on?
- Are there ethical issues associated with this?

Something to think about

AI tools are ultimately only as good as the data that feeds them, and systemic, human and computational/ statistical bias may be present. Bias may originate from the training dataset which may have historic and societal biases built in leading to perpetuation of stereotypes. AI tools can only be as objective as the data it was created with. Similarly, the algorithms do not understand what the data means or the context, and when making decisions based on the distribution of data and tagged data features, we may see prejudiced correlation and statistical bias.

Owner

- Who is the owner or developer of the AI technology?
- Who is responsible for it? A researcher or research institute, a private company, government organisation?
- Who has access to it?
- Who can use it?

Something to think about

Asking who is responsible for the development of the tool and who owns the technology is an important critical question as this will influence the reliability, objective and bias. Consider searching for information about the tool and owning developer/ company to find out more about them. Explore any about us links you can find and AI directories such as [Futurepedia](#) can be useful for your evaluation.

Type

- Which sub-type of AI based tool is it?
- What kind of information system does it rely on? Does it rely on human intervention?

- What does this mean for the functionality and capability of the tool and how you hope to use it?

Something to think about

Spend some time developing your basic AI Literacy and acquiring an understanding of the different types of AI and how they work. Visit the AI Literacy webpages to help you.

Based on the ROBOT tool created by Hervieux, S. and Wheatley, A. (2022) 'Separating Artificial Intelligence from Science Fiction: Creating an Academic Library Workshop Series on AI Literacy', in *The Rise of AI: Implications and Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Academic Libraries*. Association of College & Research Libraries, Chicago, IL, pp.61-70.