



Part III of III in a series on Artificial Intelligence written by our colleague [Alan D. Mead, Ph.D.](#)

Six Rules of Engagement for AI Users

Now that you know how an LLM works, here is some advice about how to use it well.

1. **Never ask an LLM a question you cannot answer.** There are lots of ways an LLM can help you, but you should never trust the response to a question. If you don't know the answer, find a different way to answer the question, like a web search. The model **always** "makes up" an answer. Often, that happens to be correct but sometimes it is not. You cannot rely upon an LLM to answer factual questions for which you do not already know the answer.
2. **But you may want to occasionally ask for an answer you can evaluate.** Let's say you don't understand a math problem. You could ask an LLM to explain it. You will be able to follow the explanation and judge for yourself. Or let's say you ask an LLM for a vegan chocolate cake recipe; you should be able to examine the recipe to determine if it is reasonable or looks flawed. You should think about these sorts of questions as you are answering them, and the LLM is just assisting you.
3. **Many uses only require that the LLM produce associated output.** And this is where LLMs shine. If you ask the LLM to write an email congratulating a friend on a promotion, the LLM has a high chance of succeeding. State of the art LLMs underlying services like ChatGPT and Bard will know how to write an email, will understand the words associated with congratulating a friend on a promotion. The model will be able to generate a start, middle, and end and will invent relevant details.

For example, I had an LLM write an email requesting permission to use data in AI research. Despite nothing in the prompt about the research, the letter had an introductory paragraph, four short paragraphs explaining aspects of the study and request, and two short closing paragraphs. The letter was very good, although not perfect...

4. **Be careful to always review any LLM output.** Never share the output of an LLM directly with someone else until you have carefully reviewed it (and fixed any errors or hallucinations). After a few quick edits to the research letter, correcting details that the model had filled in with incorrect information, the letter was ready to go.
5. **Use "prompt engineering" to get the best results.** Potentially scary-sounding, prompt engineering just refers to tactics to maximize the effectiveness of your prompts to get an LLM to help you solve a problem (e.g., telling an LLM **not** to do something is less



rick@talentalignment.net



www.talentalignment.net



effective than telling the LLM what to do). There are several excellent resources, such as: <https://github.com/dair-ai/Prompt-Engineering-Guide> .

6. **Think about whether making up an answer will solve your problem.** For example, if you prompt an LLM “Write a resume for me” you will get a response asking you for more information about yourself, or else a completely fictitious resume. After all, what else can the model do? But if you provide information about yourself and your education and experience, an LLM is likely to be able to write a good first draft of your resume.

Similarly, if you say “Give me a good URL for an SQL tutorial” an LLM will invent a URL that is associated with “SQL” and “tutorial” but the invented URL may not exist and you certainly have little reason to believe that it’s a “good” place to learn SQL. You would have better luck to ask an LLM about a plan to learn SQL with weekly topics and then do a web search to look for tutorials on those topics.

Finally, remember that the model is trained on data from the Internet. If your query requires specialized knowledge that is not available online, the LLM will have limited ability to generate good responses. As an example of this, you can ask most LLMs to answer in another language like Spanish or Chinese. But most US-based models have small non-English training datasets. You will often get much better results by requesting an English-language response and then translating that into the target language.

“Follow” our [LinkedIn page](#) for the rest of our three-part series featuring Alan:

“Artificial Intelligence 101 – How it Works” (Part I)

“AI Models – The Little Engine that Can (or Might, or Might Not, or... ” (Part II)

Check out our thoughts on [advancing strategy through Culture Change](#) while you’re there!



rick@talentalignment.net



www.talentalignment.net