Role and Tone Prompt Engineering Activities

There are many ways in which you can have your students experiment with prompt engineering to explore concepts of voice, tone, word choice, and more. These activities can both help students learn more about how prompt engineering works, and also consider their own writing and how to effectively identify and use different writing techniques. As with any activity using AI, you should consider taking these activities as an opportunity not just for students to practice using a tool, but also to think critically about how these tools work.

Note: For any assignment where you are asking students to employ AI, remember to verify the parameters for AI use allowed at your institution. Keep in mind privacy and confidentiality concerns of these models, and make sure students are aware that there is not an assumption of confidentiality for any data or information they use to prompt a model. AI tools will incorporate those prompts into the data that trains their model. For students who do not want to use AI tools for these reasons, consider having an alternative assignment that will achieve similar learning outcomes but does not require the use of an AI tool.

Role: Users can instruct a generative AI model to act in a given way. The model will use this information to adjust the language it provides in its response. Have your students try selecting a topic and prompting the model to write about it from different perspectives. For example, they might ask the model to write a paragraph about renewable energy from the perspectives of a student, a politician, a farmer, and an electrical company executive. Have your students analyze the different responses, with the following questions as guides:

- What do you notice about the way the AI model's language changes when you change the role?
- How effectively do you think the AI model employs the voice of the role you instructed it to use? What changes would you make to the language?
- What biases do you think a generative AI model might be employing or reinforcing when structuring a response in the voice of a certain role?
- Taking what you've learned by observing AI role play into account, assign a role to yourself and write a paragraph using that voice. How were your language choices, techniques, and selected examples influenced by the AI responses?

Tone: Users can instruct an AI model to write or rewrite a piece in a given tone or style. Start by having students write a short paragraph about a topic relevant to your class. Then have them input that paragraph into a generative AI model and instruct the model to adjust the tone. Before you do so, discuss different examples of tones with your class that you'd like them to be familiar with. Example tones could include humorous, scholarly, conversational, and more. Then have

them instruct AI to adjust their writing to incorporate that sort of tone. Discuss the results, using the following questions as guides:

- How effectively do you think the AI response captured the tone you asked for? Provide specific examples of how the word choices, examples, or structure of the AI response supports the creation of the requested tone.
- Where did the AI response fall short in capturing the tone you asked for? What would you change in order to make it sound more authentic? Rewrite the response to capture these changes.
- Exchange revised responses with a peer. What improvements or changes would they make to capture the assigned tone effectively?

Sources

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