

MLA Student Guide to AI Literacy:

Overview and Learning Goals

- AI literacy: understand GenAI, use it ethically, evaluate output, know when not to use it
- Source-based writing depends on accountable, transparent authorship
- Four objectives: GenAI basics, evaluation, MLA citation and disclosure, responsible use
- Roadmap: foundations, citation, verification, responsible use, classroom strategies, scenarios, checklists
- Source: *MLA-CCCC Student Guide to AI Literacy (2024)*, written by the *Critical AI Literacy Workshop*



What AI Literacy Means for Students in Academic Writing

AI literacy: not tool training, but thoughtful, questioning use



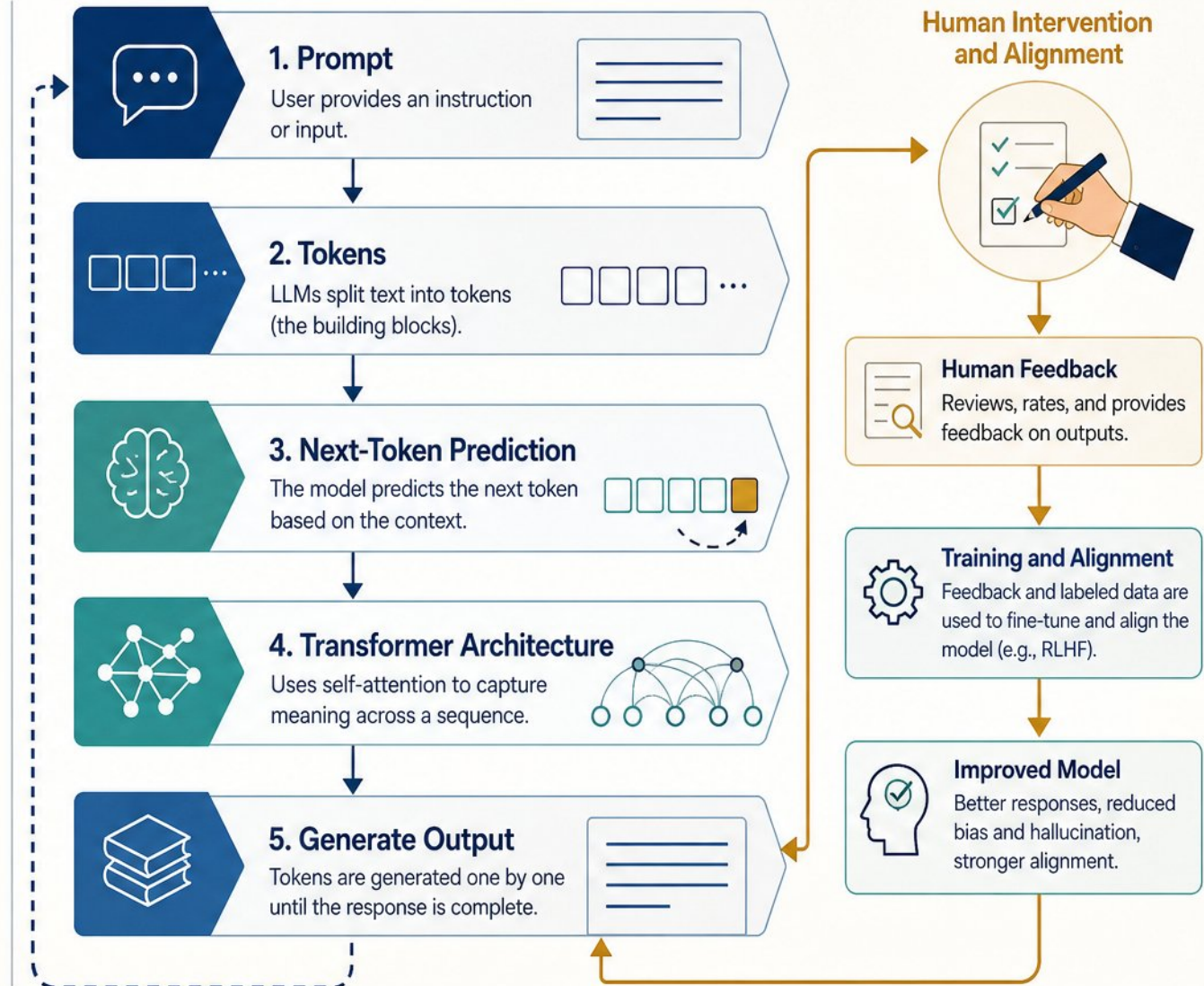
“

Critical AI literacy asks: who built it, whose data trained it, who benefits, who gets harmed?

How Generative AI and Large Language Models Produce Text



- AI predicts outcomes from statistical models trained on large datasets
- GenAI generates text, images, and video in response to user prompts
- LLMs split text into tokens, predicting the next token from context
- Transformer architecture uses self-attention to capture meaning across a sequence
- Training stages: pre-training, then fine-tuning and alignment like RLHF
- Human intervention—feedback, labeling, moderation—shapes model performance
- Key terms: prompt, token, model, training data, hallucination, bias, alignment



Why AI Output Can Be Confident and Wrong

- Models generate statistically probable text, not verified facts
- Fluent phrasing is not evidence of accuracy
- Hallucination: inference-time drift into fluent but unsupported claims
- Fabricated citations look real, even with real author names
- RAG grounds answers in sources but does not remove bias
- Expect recency, English-language, open-access, and citation-count bias
- Machine heuristic: learners assume AI is correct by default



A CONFIDENT ANSWER THAT DRIFTS

“Recent research shows that spaced repetition substantially improves long-term retention across diverse populations and learning contexts. These findings are consistent with multiple studies in the literature.”



CITATION TRAIL



Smith, J. (2019). Spaced repetition and durable learning outcomes. *Journal of Cognitive Education*.

UNVERIFIED



Johnson, L. & Patel, R. (2020). Retrieval practice in diverse learners. *International Review of Learning*.

UNVERIFIED



Garcia, M. (2021). Spaced repetition in real-world settings. *Open Learning Quarterly*.

UNVERIFIED



Lee, A. et al. (2022). Large-scale analysis of study strategies. *Journal of Educational Psychology*.

UNVERIFIED

BIAS PRESSURES AT PLAY



Recency Bias



English-Language Bias



Open-Access Bias



Citation-Count Bias



Framing Bias



Confirmation Bias



VERIFICATION: NONE CONFIRMED

Claims are fluent, but not verified.



CLAIM



SOURCE



VERIFICATION

MLA, Authorship, and Accountability



- MLA's flexible template of core elements tracks sources and authorship



- Never treat the AI tool as an author — it can't take responsibility



- Fully indicate all AI-generated content: text, images, data



- You stay responsible for accurate, original, properly attributed work



- Citing AI output as a source differs from acknowledging AI assistance



Citing Generative AI in MLA Style



- Cite any AI-created text, image, or data you quote or paraphrase
- Title of Source: describe the generated content, often the prompt
- Container: the AI tool; Version: the exact model, e.g., model GPT-4o
- Add company, generation date, and a stable, shareable URL (Aug. 2025 update)
- AI images: caption with prompt, tool, model, and date (MLA Handbook 1.7)

EXAMPLE: AI CONVERSATION WORKS-CITED ENTRY

“A guide to MLA citations for generative AI.” **prompt.** ChatGPT, model GPT-4o. OpenAI, 22 Aug. 2025, [https://chat.openai.com/.](https://chat.openai.com/)

TITLE OF SOURCE

Describe the generated content, often the prompt.

DESCRIPTION

Indicates this is a prompt.

CONTAINER

The AI tool (platform or service).

VERSION

The exact model used, e.g., model GPT-4o.

COMPANY

Organization that provided the tool.

DATE & URL

Generation date and stable, shareable URL.

EXAMPLE: AI-GENERATED IMAGE CAPTION



“Mountain landscape at sunrise.” **prompt.** DALL·E, model GPT-4o. OpenAI, 22 Aug. 2025.

DESCRIPTION

Indicates this is a prompt.

TOOL

The AI image generator.

VERSION

The exact model used.

COMPANY

Organization that provided the tool.

DATE

Generation date.



CLAIM

You make a claim or use AI-generated content.



SOURCE

Document the full source so others can find it.



VERIFICATION

Provide details that allow others to verify and reproduce.

Beyond Citation: Disclosing How You Used AI



- Citation points to what you used; disclosure shows how AI shaped your work



- AI output is not a traditional source — it predicts and may omit context



- Disclosure note: tool, version, purpose, prompts, section affected, date



- Many instructors require a prompt log, chat appendix, or reflective note



- Policies vary by course — check the syllabus or ask before assuming

CITATION

What You Used

“

Author (Year). Title of work.
Publisher.

...

VS.

DISCLOSURE NOTE

How AI Shaped Your Work



Tool:



Version:



Purpose:



Prompts:



Section affected:



Date:

DOCUMENTING THE PROCESS

PROMPT LOG



Record the prompts
you used and your
intentions.



CHAT TRANSCRIPT APPENDIX



Include relevant AI
responses in an
appendix.



REFLECTIVE NOTE



Explain how AI
informed, shaped,
or was limited.

These artifacts show transparency, accountability, and learning.



AI DRAFT

Generated with AI assistance



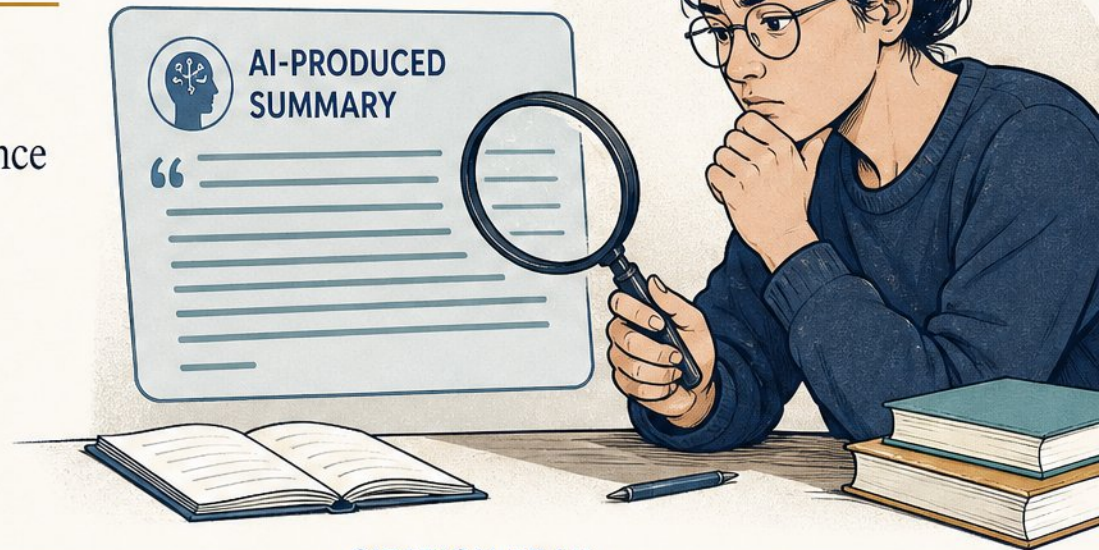
STUDENT-REVISED MANUSCRIPT

Reviewed, revised, and owned by you



Evaluating AI Output: Accuracy, Bias, and Source Quality

- - Apply the same tests as any source: accuracy, credibility, currency, bias, relevance
- - AI can invent articles or misattribute real authors to nonexistent papers
- - Confirm each cited source exists, then read it to verify the claim
- - Watch contextual errors and confident summaries that flatten study quality
- - Check currency: training cutoffs can omit recent events and new research



ACCURACY



CREDIBILITY



CURRENCY



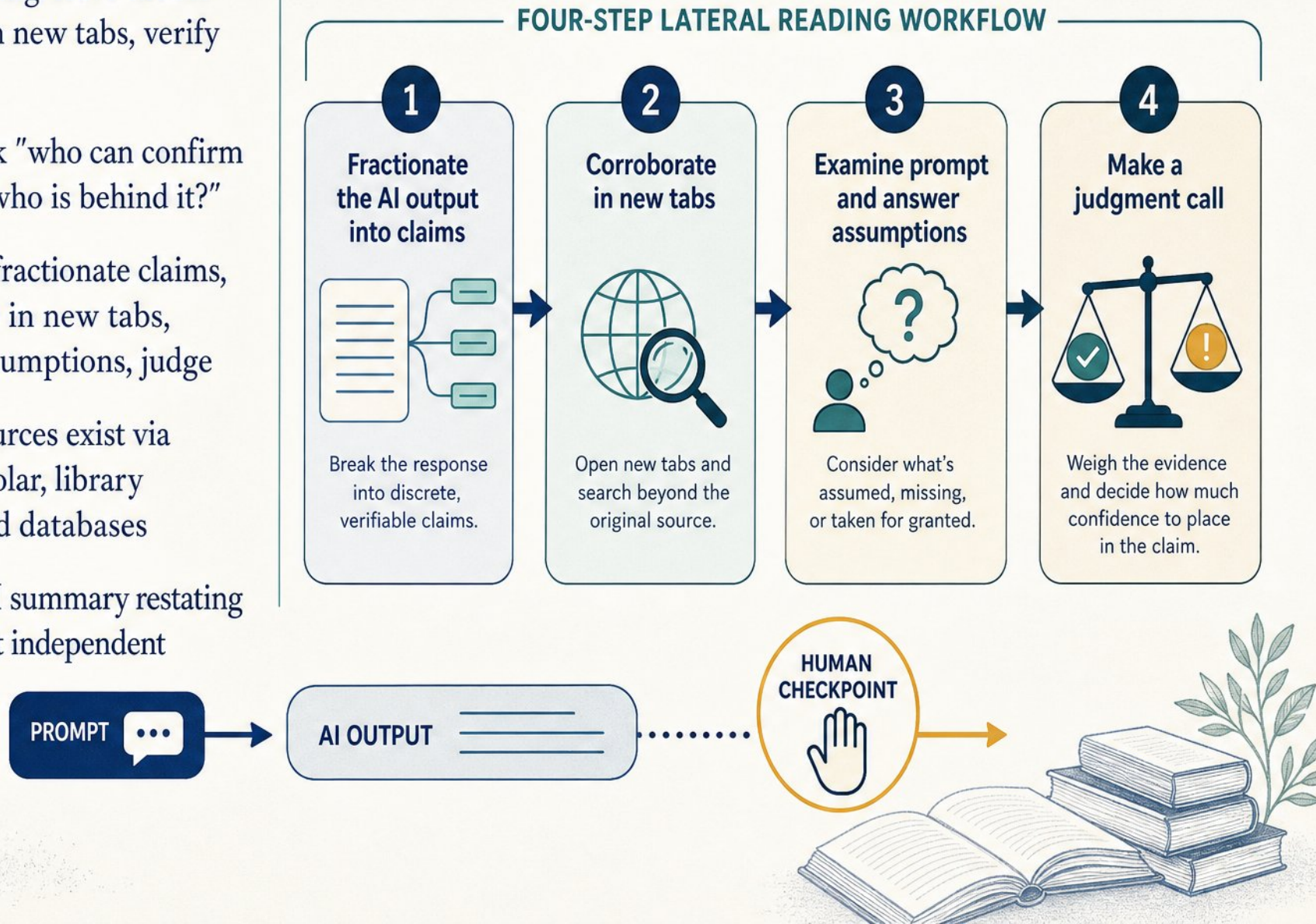
BIAS



RELEVANCE

Lateral Reading and Verification Workflows

- Lateral reading: leave the AI output, open new tabs, verify elsewhere
- With AI, ask "who can confirm this?" not "who is behind it?"
- Four steps: fractionate claims, corroborate in new tabs, examine assumptions, judge
- Confirm sources exist via Google Scholar, library catalogs, and databases
- A Google AI summary restating a claim is not independent verification



Using AI Responsibly Across the Writing Process



- Match AI use to the stage: brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, editing



- Delegate tasks AI can support; keep thesis, argument, interpretation yourself



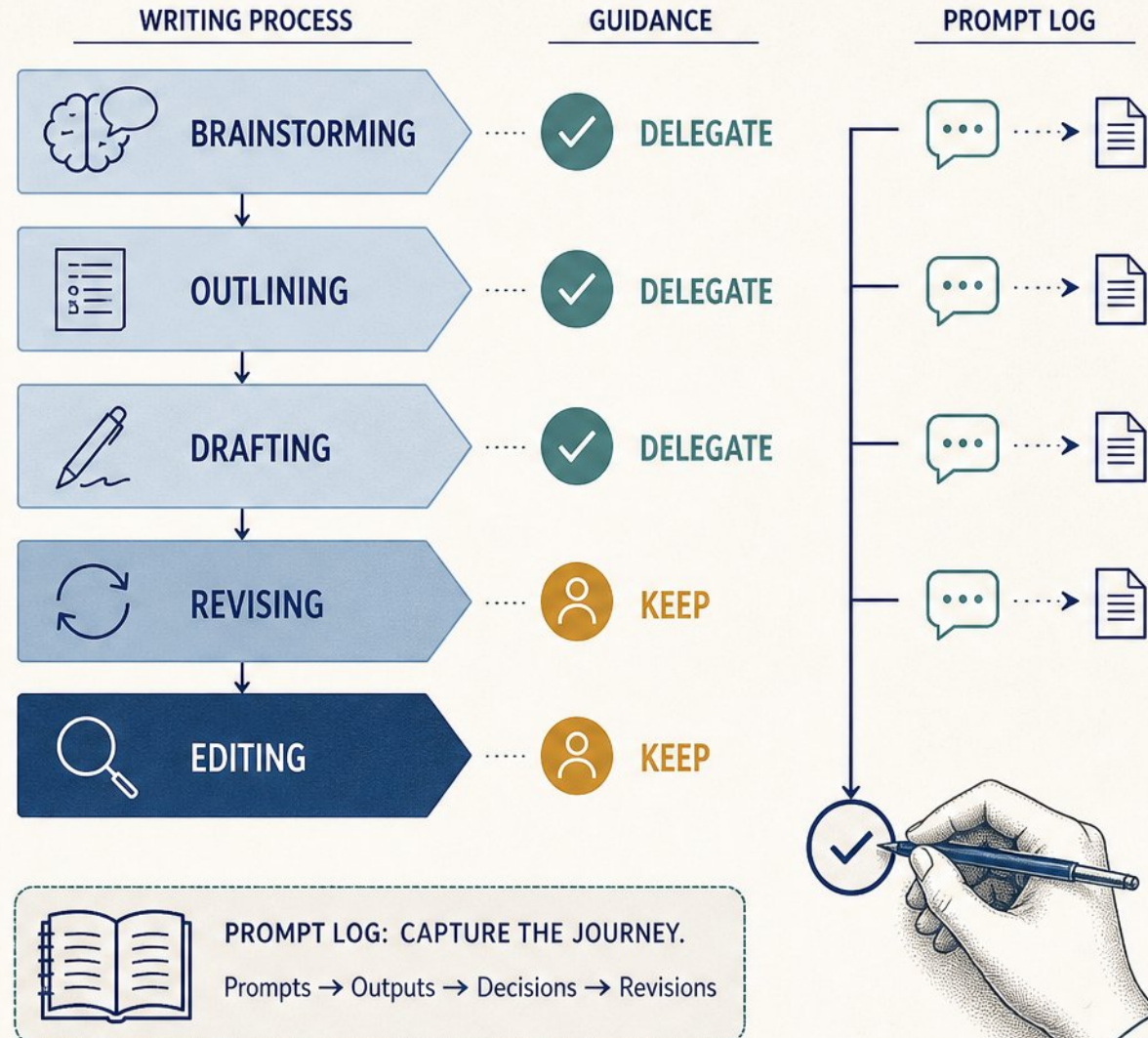
- Avoid generating full essays or substituting AI summaries for source reading



- Log prompts, outputs, decisions, and revisions to support disclosure



- Preserve your voice: explain, justify, and defend every element



Classroom Strategies for Instructors, Librarians, and Support Staff



LIBRARY



WRITING
CENTER



CLASSROOM



- Design assignments making AI use transparent with attention to relevance and authenticity



- Integrate AI literacy with MLA citation, source evaluation, and research skills



- Use scaffolded activities: AI-output critique, prompt journals, verification assignments, AI use logs



- Assess process and product: verification quality, attribution completeness, authorial mastery



- Avoid over-relying on AI detection tools—unreliable, biased against non-native speakers



Practical Scenarios: Applying AI Literacy to Student Work

- **Brainstorming:** student logs AI prompts but writes the outline unaided, then discloses tool and purpose
- **Suspicious source:** student finds a cited article doesn't exist in Google Scholar and discards it
- **Instructor:** suspecting undisclosed AI use, asks about process, framing it as educational
- **Library support:** librarian helps verify AI citations and cite originals, not the AI summary
- **Debrief** each scenario against disclosure, verification, and authorship rules



Library



Writing Center



Classroom

Checklists and Campus Support Resources



STUDENT CHECKLIST

- Student checklist: check syllabus, log prompts, verify citations, disclose AI use, defend your work.



INSTRUCTOR CHECKLIST

- Instructor checklist: state policy per assignment, name permitted and prohibited uses, require disclosure.



- Avoid detection tools as sole evidence — unreliable and biased against non-native speakers.



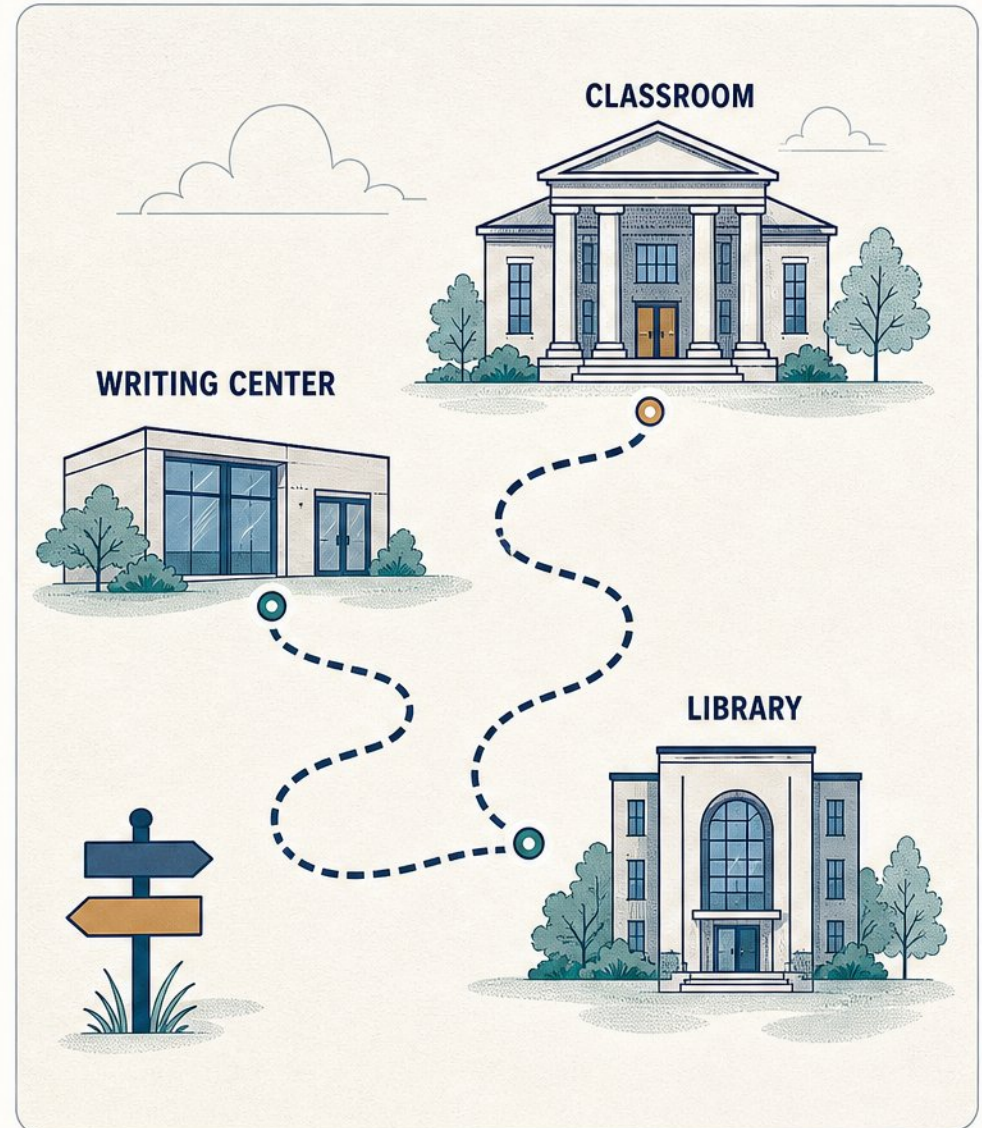
- Get help: writing center, library reference services, academic integrity, accessibility services.



- Equity note: multilingual writers and students with disabilities — ask what is allowed.



- Quick reference: MLA Style Center guidance on citing generative AI (August 2025 update).



Building Your Own AI Literacy Practice

- - AI literacy is durable, not a one-time lesson
- - Tools, models, and policies keep changing
- - Habits of verification transfer across new tools
- - Self-check before submitting: explain, trace, disclose
- - Revisit your institution's policy each term
- - Use AI to support your thinking, not replace it
- - Preserve your own voice in the scholarly conversation
- - Next step: verify a source, log a prompt, or write a disclosure note



PersonWise.

PersonWise • AI digital-human course platform



Scan the code or click anywhere to watch this course live, with voice Q&A

personwise.ai/t/f0bdd425/public