AI AT WORK · BEGINNER · 14 MIN READ

AI in the classroom: a guide for teachers

Plan lessons, differentiate, give faster feedback and set fair AI rules with students, while protecting student privacy.

Pass the check (4 of 5) online to earn the “Classroom Innovator” badge:
https://digitalbuilders757.com/university/study/ai-in-the-classroom-for-teachers

Where AI saves teachers time

- Planning: a first draft of a lesson plan, objectives, warm-ups and exit tickets you then adapt to your class.
- Differentiation: the same text rewritten at different reading levels, with vocabulary support or in another language.
- Practice: question banks, worked examples and quiz variations for retakes.
- Feedback: comment starters tied to your rubric, which you check and personalise.
- Admin: emails to families, newsletters, permission slip wording and meeting notes.

Keep the teacher in charge

AI drafts; you decide. Check every fact, example and answer key, since AI can be confidently wrong. Never let AI assign final grades or make decisions about a student on its own, and watch for bias in feedback and examples. Your knowledge of your students is the part AI doesn't have.

Protect student privacy

Follow your school's or district's AI policy and approved-tools list. Don't paste names, grades, behaviour notes, health or special-education information into AI tools that your school hasn't approved for student data. In the United States, laws such as FERPA (student education records) and COPPA (children under 13 online) apply, and many AI tools set minimum ages for users, so check the tool's terms before students sign up. When in doubt, remove names and details first.

Set fair AI rules with students

Decide per assignment whether AI is not allowed, allowed for brainstorming, or allowed with a disclosure, and say so clearly. Design tasks that show thinking: drafts, reflections, oral explanations and in-class work. Teach students to use AI as a tutor (explain, quiz me, give hints) rather than a ghostwriter, and to say how AI helped. AI detectors are unreliable, so focus on conversations and process rather than accusations.

Key terms

Prompt
What you give the AI: instructions, a question and any material to work from.

Bias (in AI)
Unfair patterns an AI picks up from its training data.

AI disclosure
A short note saying how AI helped make something.

Custom instructions
Preferences you save once so the assistant follows them in every chat.

Hallucination
A confident AI answer that is false or made up.

Personal data
Information about an identifiable person, like names, emails or grades; follows privacy rules.

Human in the loop
A person approves important steps before they happen.

Try it: One lesson, three levels

1. Pick a short reading or topic from your next lesson (no student names or data).
2. Ask an AI for a lesson outline with an objective, a warm-up, an activity and an exit ticket.
3. Ask it to rewrite the key text at three reading levels and create five check-for-understanding questions.
4. Fact-check everything, edit it to fit your class, and write one sentence for students on how AI may be used in this lesson.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

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5 questions. Circle one answer for each; 4 or more correct passes. Answers are at the back.

1. What's the best use of AI for differentiation?

A. Rewriting a text at different reading levels for you to check
B. Letting AI decide which students are behind and place them in groups
C. Replacing the lesson with a chatbot
D. Grading every essay automatically

2. Which should you NOT paste into an AI tool your school hasn't approved?

A. A public poem you're teaching
B. Students' names with their grades or special-education notes
C. A generic lesson objective
D. A science topic like photosynthesis

3. AI writes your answer key. What next?

A. Hand it out straight away
B. Hand it out, and ask students to report any wrong answers during the test
C. Check every answer, since AI can be confidently wrong
D. Only check the first few questions; if those are right, the rest will be too

4. A clear classroom AI rule looks like…

A. 'Don't cheat.'
B. 'AI is banned forever everywhere.'
C. No rule, students will figure it out
D. 'For this essay you may use AI to brainstorm, not to write; add one line saying how you used it.'

5. You suspect a student used AI against the rules. Best first step?

A. Talk with the student and ask them to explain their work
B. Trust an AI detector's score, since they are accurate enough to prove it
C. Give a zero immediately
D. Post about it in class

Official sites

US Department of Education: Student Privacy Policy Office (FERPA): https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/
FTC: COPPA frequently asked questions: https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/complying-coppa-frequently-asked-questions

Last reviewed 2026-11-25. AI tools change fast; check each tool's own site for current features, plans and prices.

ANSWER KEY

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1. A: Rewriting a text at different reading levels for you to check
AI is great at versions of content; the teacher checks and decides who gets what.

2. B: Students' names with their grades or special-education notes
Student records are private; laws and school policies limit where they can go.

3. C: Check every answer, since AI can be confidently wrong
AI hallucinations happen; a teacher's check keeps assessment fair.

4. D: 'For this essay you may use AI to brainstorm, not to write; add one line saying how you used it.'
Specific, per-assignment rules with a disclosure are fair and easy to follow.

5. A: Talk with the student and ask them to explain their work
Detectors are unreliable; conversations about process are fairer and teach more.