

# Practical ideas for using large language models (LLMs)



With these four principles in mind, here is a selection of different practical ideas that we can pass on to our students. For some of these ideas I have provided more detail on how learners can implement these ideas, for others I have provided a basic model. They are flexible starting points for you to work with and adapt. As you do, I would encourage you to keep the four principles in mind.

## Increasing grammatical and lexical range

A learner can have a conversation with an LLM about, say, the weather. At any point, the learner can ask for a comprehensive list of all the different grammatical structures used within the conversation. A suitably written prompt will produce a list of examples from the conversation alongside the name of the grammatical structure, for example:

Modal verbs (*can, could*), example: ‘*You could consider finding indoor alternatives.*’

One thing a learner might do with the list is to see what grammatical items are missing from those that have been studied recently in school. Another would be to check the list agrees with what the learner knows already. ChatGPT usually throws up one or two dubious examples in a list like this – it can be an enjoyable challenge for a learner to spot them.

A similar prompt can be given with the aim of generating a list of topic-based words, collocations and expressions, for example:

*rain*

*covered outdoor-seating areas*

The lexical sets produced in this way can be edited, recorded and added to by the learner. The items can also be searched for elsewhere in search engines. Learners can be encouraged to find the same words used in different contexts, or to look for useful synonyms.

## Improving writing skills – summary writing

A learner can write a summary of a text they have been working on (either one they have studied or written themselves). They can then ask an LLM to write a summary of the same text (the number of words can be specified). This provides some material for comparison and evaluation against such criteria as accuracy, clarity and relevance. Learners should be encouraged to identify aspects they prefer about their own summary. The LLM can then be asked to evaluate the learner’s summary and the learner can decide if they agree with the evaluation.

- 1 Maintain efficiency while maintaining flow.**
- 2 Be explicit about intended output.**
- 3 Be mindful of the challenge and opportunities when achieving the intended output.**
- 4 Encourage the use of other sources and resources, including people.**



## Practice of functional language – describing images

A learner can choose an image they like and use an AI image generator to ‘paint’ the picture with words. Once the image has been created they can try again by adjusting the language used the first time to get it closer to the original.

## ChatGPT or me?

Learners write output in the style of ChatGPT and try to convince their classmates it is real computer-generated output.

## The teacher can’t ChatGPT like I can ChatGPT

Set up challenges involving participants getting the best output from the ChatGPT. Examples might include: the best recipe for a particular dish; the best set of instructions on how to use a particular piece of equipment; or the funniest conversation. Is it true the teacher has the language ability to fine tune the prompts better than the students? Perhaps the learners understand what is required more than the teacher.

## Making ChatGPT lie

Have a contest among the students to see who can make ChatGPT come closest to lying. It is supposed to be impossible, but I have managed to ‘trick’ ChatGPT into informing me that  $1 + 1 = 5$ . This is a fun way to encourage learners to see how creative and specific they can be with their prompts.

## ChatGPT versus Bing

Learners can compare output from different LLMs and decide, for example, which is: the best; the most useful; and the most accurate. This is particularly beneficial for fostering the idea of always thinking critically when using AI.

## Nightmare scenarios

Learners can ask ChatGPT’s advice on how to act in different nightmare scenarios. Some memorable ones I have tried are waking up in a city in which all other human beings have disappeared, and living in a world in which the ocean is entirely made of peanut butter. The engaging aspect of this kind of challenge is that it does take some convincing before ChatGPT will take you seriously.

## Songs in the style of . . .

Learners get ChatGPT to write songs in the style of famous musicians – their peers have to guess who it is. This is good for encouraging deeper-level reading and spotting writing style characteristics.

## Guess who? games

In its simplest form the user can think of a celebrity and ChatGPT can ask closed questions to guess who the user is thinking of. It is remarkably good at this. I have found it is less good at allowing the user to be the guesser – but perseverance might reap rewards. Also, this could be used in the above activity: The teacher can’t ChatGPT like I can ChatGPT.



## Dictation challenges

Since ChatGPT can speak, it can be made to read text multiple times. This is an ideal opportunity for learners to engage in dictogloss and other dictation challenges at home. Encourage users to specify that the output should be restricted to a specific length (e.g. 100 words for an advanced learner). This, of course, can also be done with the learner as dictator. What ChatGPT hears can be evidence of good pronunciation and areas that need work.

## Bias spotting

Since bias in computer-generated output is a very real problem, it is a good idea to help learners to be adept at spotting it. One way is to encourage learners to bring examples they have found into class for discussion. This will also encourage bias spotting in other areas of the learners' lives.

## Fallacy collecting

Learners can be encouraged to interrogate ChatGPT on subjects they know a lot about and find examples of 'hallucinations', basically where the LLM's best guess is not good enough. Encourage them to bring them to class and perhaps have a class top ten AI blunders.