



Authors: Henning Czech, in collaboration with Katrin Wanninger,
translated from German to English by Elias Janssen
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How to Cite AI-Generated Texts

Introduction

This information sheet provides informative guidelines on how to formally cite the use of generative AI in term papers and theses, in accordance with general citation standards. The recommendations are specifically tailored to the fields of engineering and economics.

The following guidelines are based on two documents (freely available in the [Toolbox für Studium und Lehre](#)¹ of the LearningCenter) and one video (freely available in the YouTube playlist [Lerntipps vom LearningCenter der Hochschule Osnabrück](#)²):

- *Zitieren in ingenieurwissenschaftlichen Haus- und Abschlussarbeiten*
(Citation in Engineering Term Papers and Theses)
- *Zitieren in wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Haus- und Abschlussarbeiten*
(Citation in Economics Term Papers and Theses)
- *Wie zitiere ich? Logischer Aufbau von Zitaten in Haus- und Abschlussarbeiten*
(How to Cite? Logical Structure of Citations in Term Papers and Theses)

Additionally, students at Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences are encouraged to consult the FAQs regarding the use of AI in exams, available on [this intranet page](#)³. These FAQs provide background information on examination protocols and copyright matters.

For the examples provided below, the ChatGPT-4 model by OpenAI has been used. However, the approach described here is applicable to other AI models as well.

¹ The content of these documents is not yet available in English.

² The content of these videos is not yet available in English.

³ The content of this page is not yet available in English.





Do you want to create scientific papers with just one click?

It's not that simple! However, if you stick to a few guidelines (and master AI prompting⁴), generative AI can be a useful tool.

Recommendations

In general, AI-generated text should be treated (formally) like content from any other sources that require citation. Standard citation rules can be applied when incorporating AI-generated text into academic work.

I. Citation

1. If AI-generated text is **used word-for-word**, it should be marked as a **direct quote** by placing the text in quotation marks.

Engineering: Use the citation in square brackets with the essential source information for in-text citations (known as the long referencing formula). Example:

“AI-GENERATED TEXT” [OpenAI, 2023, Prompt No. 1] OWN TEXT

For in-text citations, it is generally sufficient to use an abbreviated citation format, consisting of a simple number such as “[1]” in square brackets, which is explained in the reference list (numerical system). However, this approach may be misleading when citing generative AI because:

- a. Readers should immediately recognize that AI-generated text as the source is not equal to academic literature, and merely functions as a tool.
- b. Tools should not be listed in the reference list under numbers reserved for academic sources but rather under a separate section.

Economics: A short citation should be formatted like other source references – either in footnotes (footnote system) or directly in the text (author-year system):

“AI-GENERATED TEXT” (OpenAI, 2023, Prompt No. 1) OWN TEXT

“OpenAI” refers to the institution or developer behind the tool (where the author of a source would typically appear). In this case, the GPT model was released in 2023,

⁴ Prompting refers to the process of formulating targeted queries for an AI tool, specifically to generate text.

thus citing “2023” (where the year of release of the used source would typically appear). The prompt number (where a page number would typically appear) refers to a list of prompts at the end of the paper (see point 6).⁵

2. **Omission and corrections in direct quotes** should be marked with an ellipsis in square brackets “[...]”. This may be necessary, for example, if the AI includes non-existent or incorrect sources, which should be removed.

If references in the directly quoted AI-generated text are corrected or supplemented, the author's initials should be added.

Engineering (with numerical system for standard citation):

“AI-GENERATED TEXT [...] AI-GENERATED TEXT [1, supplemented by HC] AI-GENERATED TEXT” [OpenAI, 2023, Prompt No. 1] OWN TEXT

Economics (with standard citation details):

“AI-GENERATED TEXT [...] AI-GENERATED TEXT [cf. Mustermann, 2017, p. 1, supplemented by HC] AI-GENERATED TEXT” (OpenAI, 2023, Prompt No. 1) OWN TEXT

In economics, square brackets are also used to indicate omissions or additions, consistent with standards for marking changes in direct quotes.

The use of “cf.” is necessary because the source referenced **within the AI-generated text** is typically not quoted word-for-word **by the AI**. At most, the content from the supplemented source is rephrased.

Caution: AI-generated text often includes fabricated or “hallucinated” sources, which should be carefully verified.

3. When **paraphrasing entirely AI-generated text** (i.e., **indirectly quoting**), it should be treated the same as indirect quotes from literature.

Engineering: As mentioned earlier, the long reference formula should be used. In engineering, the “cf.” is usually omitted. It is only the absence of quotation marks that clearly indicates it is not a direct quote. Example:

⁵ There are two primary methods for numbering prompts – text-chronological or time-chronological. “Text-chronological numbering” involves assigning numbers to prompts based on their order of appearance in the final text. In this approach, each prompt is numbered according to when its corresponding reference appears in the document. (If a prompt is cited multiple times, it retains the same number throughout.) “Time-chronological numbering” follows the sequence in which prompts were generated during the research or writing process. This means that a prompt with a higher number may appear earlier in the text if the reference was created later than a lower-numbered prompt. If you choose the time-chronological approach, it is advisable to clarify this in a footnote or similar notation to ensure transparency.

OWN PARAPHRASE OF AI-TEXT [OpenAI, 2023, Prompt No. 1] OWN TEXT

Economics (with the standard use of “cf.” for indirect quotes before listing the source):

OWN PARAPHRASE OF AI-TEXT (cf. OpenAI, 2023, Prompt No. 1) OWN TEXT

4. When paraphrases and direct quotes of AI-generated text alternate, the **outlined rules must be applied repeatedly**, as with other sources. This might look as followed:

Engineering:

OWN TEXT “AI-GENERATED TEXT” [OpenAI, 2023, Prompt No. 1] OWN PARAPHRASE OF AI-TEXT [OpenAI, 2023, Prompt No. 2] OWN TEXT

Economics:

OWN TEXT “AI-GENERATED TEXT” (OpenAI, 2023, Prompt No. 1) OWN PARAPHRASE OF AI-TEXT (cf. OpenAI, 2023, Prompt No. 2) OWN TEXT

Note: The prompt numbers may repeat if the respective text passages or content come from the same prompt.

II. List of References

5. In the **reference list**, AI models should be listed under a separate heading for tools used. The details can (depending on the formatting system used) look as followed:

Engineering:

OpenAI, GPT-4: Generative Pre-trained Transformer 4 [text-generating AI model], 2023. Available at: <https://openai.com>, last accessed on April 26, 2024

Economics:

OpenAI: GPT-4: Generative Pre-trained Transformer 4 [text-generating AI model], 2023, available at: <https://openai.com> [April 26, 2024]

Alternatively, students at Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences can also provide the URL of the [HAWKI Website](#) if the AI model was accessed through that.

6. At the end of the paper, a **prompt list** should be included, showing which prompt corresponds to which prompt number mentioned in the text. This can be done in tabular form. While prompts usually involve a dialogue with the AI until the desired output is

generated, it is recommended to consult with examiners on the level of detail required. Listing all outputs generated with the prompts seems impractical and is discouraged for the sake of clarity.

Sources and Further Information

LearningCenter of Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences (no date): Toolbox-Bereich für Studierende [Online directory for teaching and learning materials]. Available at: <https://www.hs-osnabrueck.de/learningcenter/fuer-studierende/toolbox-studierende/> (accessed on April 26, 2024)

LearningCenter of Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences (2023): Wie zitiere ich? Logischer Aufbau von Zitaten in Haus- und Abschlussarbeiten. [YouTube video]. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmTgcStaTII&list=PLSjDva2jYXd3rSJq6MdrwZQSbj-pt7wU4&index=30> (accessed on May 3, 2024)

Office of the University Registrar of Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences (no date): Nutzung von künstlicher Intelligenz bei Prüfungen – FAQ. In: Intranet der Hochschule Osnabrück. [University internal source]

Drawings

Lea Mareile Tempel, Katrin Wanninger

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