



Understanding Generative AI

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

It seems like every time parents start to get comfortable with the latest technology, a newer and more advanced tool shows up that challenges them. These days the newest artificial intelligence technology getting a lot of attention is generative AI (GenAI). Everywhere you turn, people are talking about the concerns and opportunities of GenAI. In a recent report from the [Family Online Safety Institute](#) entitled [Generative AI: Emerging Habits, Hopes and Fears](#), they ask an important question, “People understand that we’re in a pivotal moment of technological evolution - but how do they foresee the future unfolding?” They surveyed parents and teens across the United States, Germany, and Japan and discovered:

- Family-specific concerns about GenAI include cyberbullying and loss of critical thinking skills.
- A majority of parents feel positive about their teens using GenAI.
- Most parents and teens expect and accept that GenAI is here to stay and that it will be more embedded and ubiquitous in work, school, and their personal lives.

In the Boston Children’s [Digital Wellness Lab’s](#) Pulse Survey, [Use of Voice Assistants and Generative AI by Children and Families](#), they explored families’ experience and attitudes about GenAI. The results were interesting:

“People understand that we’re in a pivotal moment of technological evolution – but how do they foresee the future unfolding?”

About half of parents indicated that their child has used GenAI:

51% to seek out information/advice

50% for creative activities

Most parents perceived GenAI as having a positive impact on their child’s:

66% curiosity/desire to learn

65% imagination/creativity

59% critical thinking skills

58% education/schooling

50% social skills

These reports show that parents are indeed thinking a lot about GenAI. This resource has been created to give parents even more information and understanding about what GenAI is, what the pros and cons are with using generative AI, and how to have conversations with your tweens and teens about the technology.

What is generative AI?

GenAI is artificial intelligence that *generates* content (e.g., text, images, video, and audio). GenAI is trained by humans to take in already existing data and create new content. The GenAI tool takes in massive amounts of text or other data, looks for patterns, learns them, and then creates outputs. GenAI can only use the information available to it when it is trained.

GenAI is already being used in everyday life. People use it when brainstorming writing assignments, communicating with chatbots, creating virtual worlds, or translating books. GenAI is being used in classrooms, businesses, science labs, factories, music studios, and even in our homes.

What are the pros of generative AI?

There is a lot to be excited about when it comes to GenAI. GenAI tools increase efficiency and productivity. Many companies can automate basic tasks using GenAI so that their employees are freed up to do more strategic and creative work. GenAI can generate new, innovative ideas and be used for creative projects such as writing, drawing, gaming, and making video content. In education, GenAI has been a helpful tool for teachers to personalize assignments and exams for students of differing abilities. Students can use GenAI to help brainstorm ideas for writing assignments and receive feedback on improving work.

What are the cons of generative AI?

With any technological advancements, it's always important to consider downsides and risks. In the classroom, students can be tempted to use GenAI to actually do their work for them as opposed to

using it to enhance their work. It's important that teachers and schools have explicit guidelines on the use of GenAI with school work.

Because the content generated by GenAI depends on the information it is trained on, there is always the possibility of it making mistakes. AI “hallucinations” are results that are misleading or incorrect, and can be caused by assumptions made by the AI, insufficient training data, or bias. Bottom line, the content generated by GenAI can be flawed and shouldn't be depended on as factual. Remember, the content is not fact-checked, and it's still up to humans to make sure they are confirming the reliability of information they receive from GenAI tools. Also, not every GenAI tool provides sources for the data it outputs, so it's also important to make sure not to violate copyright laws when using content.

With any technology, it's important to keep an eye out for bad actors and scams. Given how advanced GenAI tools are, the risk of being tricked by video and audio has increased. If someone sends threatening or suspicious video or audio, parents may want to be hypervigilant to double-check the reliability of information, especially if it claims to impersonate people known in real life.



Can media literacy skills help navigate and understand generative AI?

Media literacy education empowers people to be critical thinkers and makers, effective communicators, and active citizens. In today's complicated technological landscape, these skills have never been more important. Media literacy skills apply to the use of GenAI. Topics such as safety, privacy, reliability, copyright, and ethics all fall under the media literacy umbrella and all have a lot to do with understanding and navigating GenAI.

To help their kids gain media literacy skills, parents can support their tweens and teens by encouraging them to develop habits of inquiry – which means teaching them to ask questions! When encountering information of all types (e.g., text, images, video, audio), we all need to ask questions and think deeply about where the

content originated from, who created it, why it was created, and reflect on our response to it.

GenAI is definitely here to stay, but we know that something new will be around the corner for us to explore. Technology will continue to evolve, and we need to be prepared to keep learning. Asking questions and reflecting on your experience are great ways to build media literacy skills for your tween or teen – or even for you! For tips you can share with your tween or teen, [check out this resource](#) we created just for them. Included in the resource are activities you can do with them as you explore GenAI together.

For text-based GenAI tools, here are some important questions to remind tweens or teens to consider:

Am I sure this information is credible? This is super important if your child is using it to help with a school assignment.

What bias is reflected in the results? Remember generated information is only as good as the data it was trained on.

Did I get the information I needed or should I try another prompt to gather more information? Reflecting on how well the tool accomplished what you set out to achieve is a good way to assess the limitations of a tool.

For visual-based GenAI tools, here are some additional questions you can remind your tween or teen to think about:

Does the GenAI output look like what I expected? This reflective process is important to building media literacy skills and it helps assess the effectiveness of the tool.

What updates or additional prompts can I use to get closer to what I need? Thinking deeply about the questions and search criteria you input into GenAI tools allows you to build your skills and understand the tool better.

Did you learn something new about the limitations or possibilities of GenAI? Taking some time to reflect on how well the tool worked for your particular purpose is a good way to fine-tune your knowledge and be a more discerning GenAI user.



Roblox and generative AI

Roblox is a platform for immersive connection and communication. Roblox's goal is to build the safest and most civil online platform, where everyone is empowered to connect, create, and thrive. And now there are exciting new GenAI features and tools that empower even more people to easily create and share on Roblox. GenAI is used in a number of ways on Roblox, from making creation [faster and easier](#) to supporting moderation (including text chat, [immersive voice communication](#), images, and 3D models or meshes).

About NAMLE

The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) has been dedicated to advancing media literacy education since 1997. Now the largest media literacy membership organization around the globe, NAMLE unites a community of educators who help expand media literacy in both formal and informal learning environments. The NAMLE vision is to help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators, and active citizens. For more information, please go to namle.org.