

Using AI Tools

A Guide for Retired Professors

ChatGPT 01.07.2026

A Problem

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a practical tool for lifelong learning, research, writing, and communication. Retired professors can use AI to continue scholarly pursuits, mentor others, organize personal archives, and explore new interests without needing advanced technical expertise.

What Is AI?

AI systems, such as conversational assistants, can:

- Answer questions
- Summarize articles and books
- Explain complex topics
- Help write and edit documents
- Translate languages
- Generate images and presentations
- Assist with coding and data analysis

AI is best viewed as a knowledgeable research assistant—not as an infallible authority.

Practical Uses for Emeriti

Research

- Summarize academic papers
- Identify key themes in literature
- Suggest related readings
- Brainstorm research questions

Writing

- Draft articles, essays, and book chapters
- Improve grammar and style
- Generate outlines
- Format references (always verify)

Teaching and Mentoring

- Create lecture notes
- Develop discussion questions
- Design case studies
- Explain difficult concepts in multiple ways

Personal Projects

- Write memoirs
- Organize correspondence

- Create family histories
- Plan travel
- Learn new languages or hobbies

Best Practices

- Verify important facts with reliable sources.
- Never upload confidential or unpublished material unless you understand the privacy settings of the AI service.
- Use AI as a collaborator rather than a replacement for your expertise.
- Ask specific questions for better results.
- Revise AI-generated text in your own voice.

Example Prompts

Instead of asking: Tell me about climate change. Try: Summarize the latest evidence on climate change for an educated general audience in 500 words.

Or:

Review this draft and suggest improvements for clarity while preserving my writing style.

Or:

Explain quantum computing as if you were teaching first-year university students.

Common Limitations

AI can:

- Make factual errors
- Invent references
- Misinterpret ambiguous questions
- Reflect biases in training data
- Miss recent developments unless connected to current information

Human judgment remains essential.

Ethical Considerations

Emeriti scholars should:

- Disclose AI assistance when appropriate.
- Respect copyright and intellectual property.
- Protect confidential information.
- Maintain academic integrity.

Recommended AI Applications

- ChatGPT for writing, research assistance, and brainstorming
- Claude for long documents and thoughtful writing
- Google Gemini for integrating web information and productivity
- Microsoft Copilot for users of Microsoft 365
- Perplexity for research with cited sources

Conclusion

Retirement offers an opportunity to pursue scholarship without institutional constraints. AI can serve as a capable assistant for research, writing, learning, and creative projects, enabling emeritus professors to remain intellectually active while increasing productivity. The most effective use of AI combines the experience, critical thinking, and disciplinary knowledge of the scholar with the speed and versatility of modern AI tools.

Links

[2026 Student Guide to Artificial Intelligence](#). Human Wisdom for the Age of AI: A Field Guide to Cultivating Essential Skills. Imagining the Digital Future Center. Elon University, North Carolina, USA, May 12, 2026.

American Association of Colleges and Universities

[How to Capture Knowledge from Retiring Employees with AI: 7 Proven Strategies](#).

Professional & Continuing Education, University of Vermont, March 6, 2026.

[Artificial Intelligence and Academic Professions](#). AAUP's ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Academic Professions, July 2025; pp11.



Professors Emeriti Network

Videos of the network's Zoom meetings are posted on the [Emeriti Network YouTube](#) channel.

The source of innovation lies in the discovery of problems.

Solving a problem starts by asking the right question (problem identification).

Problems in the modern world cannot be efficiently and effectively detected without the use of information technology.