

Apple Adds AI Writing Tools to the iPhone 16. Here's Why That Could Be a Problem.

AI can write emails. AI can write songs. AI can suggest writing improvements that go beyond spelling and grammar to word choice.

As big tech companies like Google, Microsoft, and Apple roll out their latest AI features, one use case of AI keeps coming up: AI can *write*. It's sometimes so good that job seekers have asked it to write their resumes and cover letters, and new technologies have rolled out to detect AI's presence.

Related: These 4 Words Make It Obvious You Used AI to Write a Paper, According to New Research

Easier writing is a key selling point of Apple's AI, Apple Intelligence, featured in the new iPhone 16 released Monday. Apple Intelligence is "built into your iPhone, iPad, and Mac to help you write, express yourself, and get things done effortlessly" according to its product page.

Apple said the AI can help upcoming iPhone 16 users draft emails and texts.

iPhone 16. Credit: Apple

Apple isn't the first to focus on writing as an AI use case: Google ran an ad at the Olympics last month about how its AI could write a fan letter from a child to her Olympic hero – sparking conversation about what would happen when the Olympian held a stack of fan letters that sounded the same.

“As more and more people rely on AI to generate their content, it is easy to imagine a future where the richness of human language and culture erode,” Shelly Palmer, professor of advanced media in residence at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications wrote in a July 28 blog post.

Though Google ended up pulling the ad after public backlash,

the future the ad portrayed – of young people turning to ChatGPT instead of puzzling through how to say something themselves – is fast becoming a reality.

ChatGPT has over 200 million weekly users, over 60% of which are under 34 years old. Nearly one in three users are under 24 years old.

Related: Can ChatGPT Help Start a Business? I Tried the Latest Version, GPT-4o, to Find Out.

Research published earlier this year shows that university students who rely on ChatGPT experience poorer academic performance and memory loss. A separate study found that the top uses of ChatGPT were creating content, responding to emails, writing cover letters and resumes, and coming up with ideas.

AI opponents point out AI's writing abilities may be based on copyrighted works used by big tech companies without credit or compensation awarded to the people who wrote these works.

"To add insult to injury, the bot is being trained on pirated copies of my books," author Margaret Atwood wrote in a 2023 article for The Atlantic last year about the issue. "Now, really! How cheap is that? Would it kill these companies to shell out the measly price of 33 books? They intend to make a lot of money off the entities they have reared and fattened on my words, so they could at least buy me a coffee."

AI supporters say that the anti-AI group is "classist and ableist." The organization behind National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) defended AI writing last week, for example, by saying that "not all brains have [the] same abilities" and some need "outside help or accommodations" to write. Disabled writers took issue with the remarks, as well as NaNoWriMo sponsors, and the organization has since changed the wording of its stance and apologized.

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Then there are more neutral issues with AI, like estimates that AI systems could run out of free training data within the next two years, leaving open the question of what kinds of data to use next.

AI-generated content has steadily risen to the top of Google searches, doubling from about 7% in June 2023 to 14% in June 2024.

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