

10 things to know about AI image generators in the classroom

1. They create visual art in a variety of styles. They range from photorealistic to illustrations to cartoons to anime to watercolors and oil paintings and beyond. They'll even create art in the style of famous artists. (More on that in a moment.)

The only way to know is to try a certain art style.

2. Experimentation is key. You might get the perfect image from an AI image generator on the first try. But that's unlikely. It's more likely that you'll have to experiment with different variations of prompts to get the look or the type of image that you really want. Your best bet is not to use these in a rush --

especially your first time. Take time to tinker.

3. Prompt and re-prompt. Prompt an AI image generator and it'll probably create a set of four images based on your prompt. If you don't like what it created, adjust your prompt. Change the way you worded it. Be more descriptive.

Try a different style of art. Following up with multiple prompts is pretty common.

4. You can use existing images as a base. Many AI image generators let you upload an existing image -- or use a URL (link) to an image online as a starting point. Then, you can ask it to restyle it, add things to it, etc.

5. You can include lots of things in your prompt. Those include description of the image, mood, style of art, lighting, colors, artist reference, details you're looking for, etc. It's good to be more and more specific -- up to a point.

Eventually, at some point, your results might not vary that much if you continue to add more and more words.

6. AI image generators have some controversy. AI image generators use huge libraries of existing art to train themselves to create the new images you describe. The problem with that? The original creators of that existing art often haven't given permission for the AI model to use their art to train on. Many in the creative/art communities despise AI image generators because they stole the artists' intellectual property -- then created a tool that'll replicate what they do for a living. There are ethical implications here, and some educators say they simply won't use AI image generators because of it.

7. Generally, you can use AI-generated images for educational purposes. The copyright situation with AI image generators is messy. Most were trained on images that are copyrighted. Some AI image generators put a specific usage license on their images. Example: Adobe Firefly, while in beta, says its images are for non-commercial uses only. Court rulings will eventually start to set legal precedent. Check the documentation on any AI image generator you use for specific information. (And don't take any of this to be legal advice. I'm not a lawyer!)

8. Know your terms of use. If you want students to use AI image generators directly, check the age limits in the terms of use. Younger students might not be able to use them. But there's a good chance you can use AI image generators --

and then pass the image along to the student. Most terms of use only indicate who should be submitting the prompt to the app. It's up to you as to what you do with what the app created; that part isn't specified in the terms of use.

9. Most AI image generators have safeguards in place. Lots of them have created "guardrails" against a variety of concerns including misinformation, deception, explicit images, etc. In many instances, they are good -- and something we should be happy about. Sometimes, though, those safeguards will stand in the way of letting you create what you want. For example, if you wanted to create a hypothetical image based on something in history, a safeguard against deception might stop you in your tracks.

10. The gold standard for AI image generators is human hands. Want to get a quick idea of how good an AI image generator is? In my opinion, if it can create humans with realistic-looking human hands, you have a winner.