

The five biggest mistakes teachers make when using ChatGPT

I'm noticing a lot of queries and posts that demonstrate a basic lack of understanding of how to productively work with ChatGPT.

Do you make any of these common mistakes?

1. Assuming ChatGPT is always right

While ChatGPT is incredibly versatile, it's essential to remember that it should not ever replace human judgment, especially in critical areas.

The fluid, confident and coherent responses ChatGPT provides can lead users to believe that it's always correct.

ChatGPT is not infallible.

It is like an 'auto-responder on steroids' that can sound confident, even when completely wrong.

Some teachers might be tempted to use the model as a primary source for curriculum development, grading, or even addressing sensitive student issues. Please don't.

For example, a busy 10th-grade English teacher is swamped with grading and planning for end-of-year activities.

With a poetry unit coming up, they decide to use ChatGPT to generate a full week's worth of lesson plans and exam questions.

They don't review the materials thoroughly.

On the day of the test, the students are baffled. Several of the questions pertain to poets and poems they haven't studied.

Oops!

2. Not Setting Context

ChatGPT, while advanced, is not magical. It can only generate responses based on the information provided to it.

A common mistake is not providing sufficient context, leading to answers that might not be particularly useful or relevant.

For example, asking ChatGPT for classroom management tips without specifying the challenges faced or the age group of the students will likely lead to generic advice that might not be useful in your specific classroom setting.

For example: A high school science teacher asks ChatGPT for "interactive teaching strategies." Implementing the first few suggestions, they soon realize these strategies are more suited for much younger students. The high schoolers find the activities childish, leading to decreased engagement.

This teacher learns (the hard way) the importance of specificity and context, realizing that they should have tailored the query for high school-aged students.

3. Vague or Ambiguous Queries/Prompts

The precision of the query often dictates the relevance of the response. Broad or overly general questions may lead to answers that, while technically correct, don't address your immediate needs.

Consider the difference between asking for "a lesson plan" and seeking a detailed plan using the guidelines I shared in the recent series of workshops and in several posts in this group.

The latter examples are far more specific and will yield a more tailored and useful result.

4. Not Iterating on Questions

This one drives me slightly bananas.

I've read a number of posts where the poster is complaining that ChatGPT didn't produce the result they wanted.

Upon examination, it becomes obvious that they used a lousy prompt, got a mediocre result, and then gave up, assuming ChatGPT just isn't so great a tool after all.

If the first response doesn't fully meet your requirements, rephrasing the question or asking follow-ups can lead to more satisfactory, relevant and precise answers.

This iterative approach not only maximizes the benefits of using the model but also aligns with the growth mindset we often aim to instill in our students.

5. Expecting ChatGPT to be flawless in Math



ChatGPT is not a calculator.

In fact, it can make the most glaring errors in basic math.

Results can be better when linked to a plug-in, like the Wolfram plug-in. However, generally speaking, it does not excel in this area. So make sure you verify mathematical results.

The pressures that all teachers feel can lead us to take shortcuts or to give up on promising possibilities prematurely when we don't get instant results.

As you learn how to tap the incredible power of this tool, take the time to avoid these common mistakes.

(And yes, I did use ChatGPT to help create this post

