



Optus
Digital
Thumbprint

GenAI in education

**Supporting your child's
learning journey with GenAI**



Yes OPTUS

Generative AI (GenAI) is becoming the new normal, not only in classrooms but also at home and at work. Recent Australian research shows that **94% of young people aged 14–17 have already used Generative AI**,¹ making high school students the most active users of any age group surveyed. With this uptake, it is understandable that parents may feel unsure about how these tools fit into learning.

The good news is that your role matters more than your technical knowledge. Research shows that when parents stay engaged, by asking questions and modelling healthy digital habits, children are more likely to develop positive and responsible ways of using technology.²

As GenAI becomes more common in schoolwork, it can be harder to tell when it's supporting understanding and when students still need to practise their own skills. This guide helps you navigate that grey area with practical tips, conversation starters, and simple family activities.

This guide provides practical tips and conversation starters to:

- ✓ Understand what Generative AI is and how your child might already be using it for learning
- ✓ Help your child use GenAI safely, fairly and in a way that supports their learning
- ✓ Talk with your child about creativity, privacy and how GenAI tools affect their online world
- ✓ Have age-appropriate conversations that build trust and digital confidence
- ✓ Try out simple, practical actions to guide good GenAI habits at school and home



Did you know...



Nearly 4 out of 5 Australian schools already use AI-powered educational tools.³



...25.1% of students admit to 'just copying' AI outputs for homework.⁴

¹ The Insight Centre. (2025). [From Gen Z to GenAI report](#).

² Children and Screens: Institute of Digital Media and Child Development. (2025). [Parenting in the digital age: Summary and recommendations](#).

³ Champion Education. (2025). [Digital landscapes in Australian schools: Research report 2025](#).

⁴ Clark, C., & Picton, I. (2025). [Young people and teachers' use of generative AI to support literacy in 2025](#). National Literacy Trust.

GenAI as a learning companion

GenAI works best when it is helping your child understand the topic better, not just doing the work for them.

Think of it like a study partner, get things started, sort ideas, or explain concepts, but not something that needs to be used for every task.

What matters most is what happens next

Used thoughtfully, GenAI can help students:

- ✓ Brainstorm ideas
- ✓ Suggest a starting structure
- ✓ Rephrase a task in simpler language
- ✓ Generate questions to explore

Good prompts help your child stay in control of GenAI, not the other way around. When they learn to ask clear questions, add context, and refine responses, they start guiding the tool instead of just accepting answers.

Here are some simple prompting tips you can practise together at home:

A quick guide to AI and GenAI

AI vs GenAI

AI is technology that enables devices to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence.



Generative AI (GenAI) goes further by creating new content, like text, images, music, conversations, and videos, on its own.

What is a prompt?

A prompt is a written or spoken instruction you give a GenAI tool to guide its response.

Enter prompt



Steps to prompt the GenAI tool

Conversation starter:

- 1** Be clear and specific
- 2** Give useful context
- 3** Ask for a specific format
- 4** Adjust and refine if the response isn't quite right

What do we want the GenAI to do?

What is the background information, scenario or topic that could help the tool understand what we need better?

What do we want the GenAI tool to produce? Such as five dot points, two paragraphs, an illustration or a graph?

Test the prompt, if needed, adjust or refine

Starting without AI: Solving the blank page problem



Your child might turn to GenAI because they feel stuck at the start of a task. A simple way to build confidence and take ownership of learning is to begin without AI, even briefly.

Family activity: Start with your own words

Ask your child to begin a task without GenAI for a few minutes. They might jot down ideas, sketch a plan, or write a rough opening. Then pause and ask:

- What part feels clear already?
- What part still feels confusing?

If they do choose to use GenAI, encourage them to use it to clarify, build on, or improve what they've already started, not replace it.

Why this helps: starting independently strengthens confidence and makes it easier for children to recognise their own effort and learning.

Keeping learning front and centre

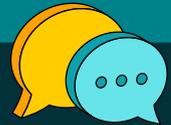
Once GenAI comes into play and starts helping your child with ideas and answers, it can help to pause and reflect together. This isn't about checking up on your child or catching them out. It's about understanding how the tool is used and whether it genuinely supports learning.

Did you know?



2 in 3 young people agree with the statement: "Even when we have AI, it is important to learn how to write."⁵

Pro tip:



How can I kick off a conversation?

Start with open-ended questions like, "Why do you think someone would use Generative Artificial Intelligence for schoolwork?" or "How could these Gen AI tools help you understand a topic, not just finish an assignment?"

These questions show curiosity, not judgment, and help your child reflect on how these tools fit into their learning.

⁵ Clark, C., & Picton, I. (2025). Young people and teachers' use of generative AI to support literacy in 2025. National Literacy Trust.

SMART check conversations:

A simple way to understand how Gen AI tools are being used is to ask open-ended questions while using GenAI together. The SMART check-in offers one way to help your child think more carefully about how they're using the tool.

Reflecting on GenAI use	Conversation starter:
 <p>S - Source Where did this information come from? GenAI tools don't always get everything right, so it's essential to pause and discuss sources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know where this information is coming from? • Would you trust this for a school assignment, or would you check it first? • What other source could you use to double-check this?
 <p>M - Meaning Does it make sense to you? If a child can't explain the answer, the Gen AI response may sound right without being properly understood.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does this mean in your own words? • Which part makes sense, and which part feels confusing? • Could you explain this to someone else?
 <p>A - Accuracy Is it correct? GenAI can sound confident even if it's wrong or incomplete.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could we check if this is accurate? • Does this match what you've learned in class? • Would you be comfortable putting this into your assignment as it is?
 <p>R - Responsibility Is it fair and appropriate to use? This helps young people think about expectations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which parts did you do yourself? • How much help do you think is okay for this task? • If your teacher asked how you made this, what would you say?
 <p>T - Tone Does it sound like you? AI-Generated work can sometimes sound more formal or advanced than your child's usual language.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this sound like how you usually write? • Which words or phrases would you change to make it sound more like you? • Would your teacher recognise this as your work?

These questions help children stay connected to their learning and build awareness of how GenAI fits into school expectations.

Let's talk about the chatbot in the room

Chatbots are a common way young people interact with GenAI for learning. They can explain concepts, suggest ideas, or help students work through a problem step by step. Because chatbots respond conversationally, they can feel like talking to a human. This makes them appealing, but it can also make it harder for young people to notice when the tool starts doing too much of the thinking.

As chatbots become part of everyday study and learning, it's worth asking: how much of this answer reflects my child's own thinking?

Understanding the copying gap

When students describe AI as "just a bit of help," they may not realise how much of the final answer was shaped by the tool.

This is known as the copying gap: the space between what a student believes they created and how much was generated by GenAI.

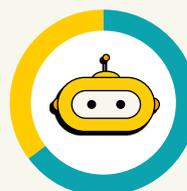
At the same time, around half of secondary students (51%) now use GenAI mainly as a time-saver.⁶ Used thoughtfully, this can free up energy for deeper thinking and learning. The difference lies in how the tool is used.

Learning with AI, not leaving it to AI.

One practical way to close the copying gap is to try the family activity below. Choose a real task your child is already working on this week, or start with one of the examples below.

The goal is to use GenAI for organising and preparation, while your child focuses on the thinking that leads to deeper learning.

Research shows...



63% of students actively want training on using chatbots without plagiarising.⁷

The Task at Hand

Organising messy class notes that are handwritten or photographed.

Finding fun and engaging ways to revise before an assessment.

Feeling more prepared for a first-job interview at the local café.

How GenAI Supports and Saves Time

Take a photo of the notes then upload to GenAI. Prompt the tool to format the notes in a clear outline or simple mind map.

Ask GenAI to turn your child's notes into a mini quiz challenge you can play together.

Use GenAI to generate three common questions that may occur in a job interview.

Where Your Child Leads the Learning

Choose three key points and explain why they matter.

Answer the questions without looking at the notes. Talk through what feels easy and what needs more work.

Practise answering out loud in their own words. Adjust and improve each answer together.

⁶Freeman, J. (2025). [Student generative AI survey 2025 \(HEPI Policy Note 59\)](#). Higher Education Policy Institute.

⁷National Education Summit. (2025). [How students are really using AI in 2025: Insights from 3,000 high school students](#).



Finding the right balance with GenAI

GenAI can support learning in different ways, and not all uses are equal. You can help your child in using the GenAI productively by pausing, noticing, and talking about how it is being used, using a simple traffic-light approach. The goal isn't to label behaviour as "good" or "bad", but to guide more thoughtful and intentional choices about learning.

It can be helpful to turn this into a small routine. For example, you might do a quick five-minute "Traffic Light" check-in after schoolwork once a week. Pausing together like this helps turn guidelines into everyday habits, making thoughtful use of GenAI part of family life rather than a one-off conversation.

GenAI Use

Green

- GenAI is helping your child understand or develop ideas, and they can explain their work in their own words.

Amber

GenAI has been helpful, but it may be doing too much.

- Homework is finished unusually fast.
- Work looks highly polished with little visible drafting.
- Your child struggles to explain the steps they took.

This is a good moment to check how learning is happening.

Red

GenAI may be doing more of the thinking.

- The language sounds far more advanced than how they usually speak.
- Formal phrases or complex vocabulary appear out of character.

They can't rephrase the answer in their own words.

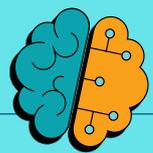
This is a good time to pause and refocus on who is doing the thinking.

Conversation Starter:

- Did this help you understand the topic more clearly?
- What new information or ideas did you take from this?

- At what stage did you decide to use GenAI for this?
- Which parts reflect your own thinking?

- How would you explain this work if your teacher asked about it?
- Which part of this task was meant to show what you've learned?



Privacy, personal information, and digital footprints

Using GenAI can feel like typing into a search engine, but many tools store or reuse what you enter. This means personal information can travel further than expected.

When using GenAI, young people may instinctively include:

- Names or school details
- Personal experiences
- Information about others

You can find out more about personal and sensitive information from the Office of the Australian Information Officer at www.oaio.gov.au

Pause before your prompt

Help your child slow down and ask:

- Does this information need to be shared?
- Would I be comfortable if this stayed online?



Digital Footprint Checklist

- ✓ Avoid full names, school names or locations
- ✓ Leave out personal stories that identify people
- ✓ Keep prompts focused on the learning task
- ✓ If it feels private, don't type it in
- ✓ Don't upload documents containing personal information without crossing it out or redacting it



These small habits help protect a child's digital footprint now and into the future.

Keep the conversation going

You don't need one big talk about GenAI. Small, regular conversations build trust and confidence over time. Staying curious and open shows your child that GenAI is something you can navigate together.



Explore our guides and quizzes

Check out these other Optus Digital Thumbprint resources for more information on how you and your child can navigate GenAI tools safely and productively.



[5 key conversations to support digital safety](#)
- Family guide



[Generative AI and online safety](#)
- Family guide



[Gen AI and online safety awareness](#)
- Quiz

What to do if your child needs more help

Take action by contacting:

- [eSafety Commissioner](#) to report cyberbullying, image-based abuse, and illegal and restricted content
- [Australian Cyber Security Centre](#) to report a cybercrime, including online threats and abuse, scams and hacks, data breaches, identity theft and fraud
- [IDCARE](#) to get identity theft, data breach, scam and cyber security support

If your child needs to talk to someone about their feelings or worries, they can contact:

- [Kids Helpline](#) on **1800 55 1800**
- [13 Yarn](#) on **13 92 76**
- [Lifeline](#) on **13 11 14**

About Optus Digital Thumbprint

Through our Digital Empowerment strategy and programs, Optus is enabling all Australians to achieve, thrive and belong in a digital world.

Optus Digital Thumbprint supports digital safety and wellbeing for young people and families. Find out more at www.digitalthumbprint.com.au

