AI Integration Tips for Teachers

A Practical Guide to Teaching with AI

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Introduction

AI tools are everywhere in education right now, and most of the conversation around them focuses on which ones to use and how to use them. As far as I am concerned, that's the wrong starting point. The teachers I've seen get real results with AI, in my own practice and in the research I cover on my blog, are the ones who started with a different question: what am I trying to teach, and what do I need my students to show me?

This guide is built on that principle. Pedagogy comes first. McTighe and Wiggins (2012; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) laid out this logic in their Understanding by Design framework, and it holds up perfectly in the age of AI. You identify your desired results. You determine what counts as acceptable evidence of learning. Then, and only then, you select the tools and activities that support the process. AI belongs in that third step. It's a means, and it only works when the goals and the evidence are already clear.

I've collected the tips in this guide from my own experience teaching with AI, from years of writing about educational technology, and from the research literature on AI in education. Some of these ideas came from trial and error in my own classroom. Others came from frameworks developed by researchers and organizations working on exactly these problems. I've tried to ground every recommendation in something real, a study, a framework, a classroom scenario, so you're not just hearing opinions but seeing where those opinions come from.

The guide covers four areas. It opens with AI pedagogy and how to build a clear, goal-driven approach to AI integration, complete with a self-assessment rubric. From there it moves to co-creating a classroom AI agreement with your students, with a ready-to-use template and discussion questions for your class. The third section takes on assessment, which is where AI has caused the most disruption, and offers both strategies and a set of design questions you can use to pressure-test your assignments.

The final section gives you an evaluation rubric for AI tools, drawn from frameworks by UNESCO, the OECD, aiEDU, and ISTE, so you can make informed decisions before bringing any tool into your classroom.

Every section includes something you can pick up and use right away: a rubric, a template, a table of questions. I wanted this guide to be something you return to when you're planning a unit, rethinking an assignment, or weighing a new tool. I hope it's useful to you. AI integration doesn't require perfection. It requires the kind of deliberate, reflective decision-making that good teaching has always demanded.

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1. Develop Your AI Pedagogy

Pedagogy refers to: *"the art and science of teaching, encompassing various methods and strategies educators use to facilitate learning. It involves understanding how students learn, the design of instructional materials, and the assessment of educational outcomes"* (UNESCO, n.d.).

Starting with pedagogy sets the right focus from the very beginning. Your AI integration should be an intentional, structured, and well-planned process, one that is grounded in pedagogy and aligns with your teaching objectives and curricular goals, not the other way around.

For each lesson or instructional task, state clearly your teaching goals, what students are expected to learn in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies, and how you're going to assess attainment of those skills. What kind of evidence do students need to produce to demonstrate they've met those objectives? Only then comes the AI part. In teaching literature, this approach is known as backward design, part of the Understanding by Design framework (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012).

To develop a clear pedagogical approach to AI integration, use the self-assessment rubric below. It covers five core dimensions and three levels of readiness. Be honest about where you are now and use the rubric to identify where you want to grow.

AI Pedagogy Self-Assessment Rubric

Dimension	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Learning Goals Clarity	Learning goals are vague or absent when planning AI-assisted tasks. AI is added because it's available, not because it serves a specific objective.	Learning goals are clearly stated before AI is introduced. AI use is connected to at least one specific objective.	Learning goals drive every AI decision. The teacher can articulate exactly what students will learn, how AI supports that learning, and what learning would be lost without it.
Backward Design Alignment	AI is added to lessons without a clear plan for how it connects to learning goals or how students will demonstrate understanding. Planning starts with the tool, not the outcome.	The teacher plans backward: desired learning outcomes come first, then the evidence students need to produce, then the activities and tools. AI is selected because it supports a specific stage of that sequence.	The full backward design sequence (goals, evidence, activities) is second nature. The teacher can trace every AI decision back to a learning outcome and explain exactly where AI adds value in the instructional sequence.
Intentional AI Role	AI is used as a general productivity tool with no defined pedagogical role. Students use it freely without guidance on purpose.	The teacher assigns AI a specific role in each task (e.g., brainstorming partner, feedback tool, research assistant) and communicates that role to students.	AI's role is differentiated by task, student need, and learning stage. The teacher adjusts AI use based on formative assessment data and student readiness.
Student Agency	Students follow AI outputs without questioning or modifying them. The task doesn't require students to demonstrate their own thinking.	Students are expected to evaluate, modify, or build on AI outputs. The task includes at least one step where students must show independent reasoning.	Students make informed decisions about when, how, and whether to use AI. They can justify their choices and reflect on how AI affected their thinking process.
Reflective Practice	The teacher doesn't evaluate whether AI	The teacher reflects on AI's impact on student learning after each unit	The teacher documents AI integration decisions, collects evidence of impact on learning, and

	improved learning outcomes after the lesson.	and adjusts future use accordingly.	shares insights with colleagues. Reflection is systematic and ongoing.

2. Co-build an AI Use Classroom Policy

In my classes I like to use the word agreement instead of policy and this is a deliberate choice. A policy is something handed down and usually carries connotations of top-down authority. An agreement is something you build together with your students, and that difference changes the entire dynamic. When students help shape the rules, they're far more likely to follow them, and far more likely to understand why those rules exist.

The UNESCO AI Competency Framework for Teachers (2024) builds this idea directly into what it expects from AI-competent educators. At the advanced level, the framework calls on teachers to "contribute to the co-creation of ethical standards for AI practices in education" (p. 27). Co-creating a classroom AI agreement is one concrete way to do that.

Do this early. I do it in the first class of every course I teach. But it only works if you come prepared. Have a draft ready before the conversation starts, a list of the key areas you want the agreement to cover: why you're using AI in this class, which tools are approved, what counts as acceptable and unacceptable use, how students should disclose AI use, privacy expectations, and what happens when something goes wrong. You're not handing students a blank page. You're bringing a structure and inviting them to shape it with you.

The conversation itself is where the learning happens. A math teacher interviewed for MIT's *A Guide to AI in Schools* (Smith et al., 2025) described creating class norms with students using a color-coded thermometer: "Red is using AI to generate answers,

presenting them as your own, clearly academic dishonesty. The bottom of the thermometer, green, being no AI. I don't know if either end of the spectrum's good, but where is the line in the sand?" (p. 34). What students came up with was a line where AI is "a tool and not a toy or a crutch." That kind of collective sense-making is exactly what a first-day AI agreement conversation should produce.

If your school already has an AI policy, your classroom agreement should align with it. The agreement doesn't replace institutional guidelines. It translates them into language and expectations that make sense for your specific class, your subject, and your students.

Use the template below to structure your classroom AI agreement. Each section includes discussion questions you can use to guide the conversation with students.

Classroom AI Agreement Template

Section	What It Covers	Discussion Questions
Why We Use AI	The purpose of AI in this class. AI supports learning by helping students shape ideas, organize thinking, and move forward when stuck. It doesn't replace their thinking; it helps them build on it.	• What does it mean to use AI as a thinking partner? • Can you think of a time when AI could help you learn something better? • When might AI get in the way of learning?
Tools We Use	The specific AI tools approved for this class (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Canva, MagicSchool, etc.). The list can change across the term as new tools appear or old ones become less useful.	• Which AI tools have you already used? • Are there tools you'd like to try for this class? • What should we consider before adding a new tool to our list?

What's Acceptable and What's Not	A clear guide for appropriate AI use. Green: brainstorming, generating visuals, checking grammar. Yellow: light help with summaries or outlines. Red: submitting fully AI-written work as your own.	• Where do you draw the line between getting help and letting AI do the work for you? • If AI writes a full paragraph and you edit two words, is that your work? • What if you write a draft and ask AI to improve it?
Tell Me How You Used AI	For any assignment where AI helped, students disclose: the tool used, the input or prompt given, what they kept or changed, and how they checked accuracy.	• Why does it matter to be transparent about AI use? • What's the difference between hiding AI use and reporting it openly? • How detailed should disclosure be?
Privacy and Safety	Keep personal details out of public AI tools. Don't share names, student IDs, or private information. Use only school-approved platforms.	• What kind of personal information should never go into an AI tool? • What happens to the data you type into a chatbot? • Who else might see it?
Equity and Access	Not every student has the same tools at home. The class provides alternatives so no one is left out or marked down for lacking access to a specific AI tool.	• What happens if some students have access to paid AI tools and others don't? • How do we make sure AI use in this class is fair for everyone?
If Something Goes Wrong	We talk first. Students can fix the work or try again. Formal consequences apply only if the same issue keeps happening. The goal is learning, not punishment.	• If you accidentally cross the line with AI use, what should happen? • What's a fair way to handle a first mistake vs. a repeated one? • Why is a conversation better than an automatic penalty?

Review and Revisit	The agreement is reviewed after the first major project and again later in the term. It can be adjusted anytime if new tools show up or if something isn't working.	• Should an AI agreement be permanent or should it change? • What would make us want to revise it? • How often should we check in on whether it's working?

Tip 3: Rethink Your Assessments for the AI Era

Assessment is arguably the area where AI has caused the most disruption. Corbin, Bearman, Boud, and Dawson (2025) call it a "wicked problem," and the label fits: a wicked problem is one that can't be solved with a single strategy because every attempted solution changes the problem itself. That's exactly what's happening. Every time educators design a new assessment approach, the technology shifts, and the goalposts move with it.

There's now a lot of talk about creating "AI-proof" and "AI-resistant" assignments, and for obvious reasons. But I have a problem with both concepts. The first one is a fantasy. There's no such thing as an AI-proof assignment in 2026. Generative AI can handle most complex cognitive tasks, from analytical essays to case study analyses to literature reviews. If your assignment can be completed with a single prompt and no human judgment, AI will do it.

The second label, "AI-resistant," frames the relationship between AI and assessment as a battle, something you defend against, something you build walls around. That framing leads to an arms race you can't win.

Here's how I approach it. First, accept that AI is going to be part of the learning environment. Then design assignments that make students' thinking visible. The real

problem with assessment right now isn't cheating. It's validity. Many teachers still treat a finished, polished product as sufficient evidence of student performance. AI can produce polished products. So, if you're grading the product alone, you have a validity problem: your assessment no longer measures what you think it measures.

Several frameworks are trying to address this. Perkins, Roe, and Furze (2024) developed the AI Assessment Scale, which gives educators a graduated framework for determining how much AI use is appropriate for each task, from no AI to full AI integration. Awadallah Alkouk and Khlaif (2024) propose a Process-Product Assessment Model that evaluates not just the final output but the process that got students there, including how they developed prompts, how they collaborated with AI, and the decisions they made along the way.

With these frameworks in mind, what we need is a layered evidentiary approach: evidence collected across time, under various conditions, and in multiple formats. No single assignment can tell you what a student knows when AI is in the room. But a combination of artifacts, collected at different points and under different constraints, can.

Here are some strategies for designing assessments that demonstrate genuine learning.

1. Connect to personal experience

Ask students to link course concepts to their own learning experiences, local contexts, or individual observations. AI can generate generic analysis. It can't fabricate a student's lived experience in a specific clinical placement, community, or classroom.

2. Focus on transfer

Design assessments that force students to apply their learning to novel, contextualized problems they haven't seen before. Transfer tasks are harder for AI to complete

convincingly because they require the student to make connections the prompt didn't specify.

3. Make it incremental and process-based

Break major assignments into stages where students submit different types of evidence across the term: an initial reflection, a draft with annotated AI interactions, a revised product, and a final reflection on their process. Grading the arc of development tells you far more than grading a single submission.

4. Include oral or live components

A short conversation about a student's work reveals immediately whether they understand what they submitted. Oral defenses, presentations, or live problem-solving sessions are among the hardest formats for AI to replace.

5. Require students to evaluate and critique AI outputs

Assign tasks where students generate content with AI and then critically assess it: What did the AI get wrong? What's missing? What would they change and why? This flips the dynamic. AI becomes the material students analyze, not the tool that does the work for them.

Use the table below to pressure-test your assessments before you assign them.

Assessment Design Questions

Assessment Design Question	Why It Matters
Can AI complete this assignment with a single prompt and no human judgment? If so, how can I restructure it?	If a prompt can produce a passing submission, the assignment measures prompting skill, not learning. Add layers that require human context, decision-making, or lived experience.
What evidence of thinking does this assignment actually collect? Is it just the final product, or does it include the process?	A polished product alone is no longer reliable evidence. Build in checkpoints, drafts, reflections, or oral components that show how the student arrived at the final output.
Does this assignment require students to connect course content to something personal, local, or experience-based?	Personal and contextual connections are difficult for AI to fabricate convincingly. They also produce deeper learning.
Can a student pass this assessment without understanding the material?	If the format allows a student to submit work they don't understand, the assessment has a validity gap regardless of AI.
Does the assessment ask students to apply learning to a new situation they haven't encountered in class?	Transfer tasks test whether students can use what they've learned, not just reproduce it. AI struggles with genuinely novel applications.
Is there a live or oral component where the student has to explain, defend, or extend their work?	Real-time conversation is the quickest way to verify understanding. It's also the hardest format to outsource to AI.
Am I collecting evidence at multiple points across the term, or relying on a single high-stakes submission?	A layered evidentiary approach, with artifacts collected under different conditions and formats, gives a far more accurate picture than one final paper.
If AI was used, does the assignment require students to disclose, critique, and reflect on that use?	Disclosure without reflection is a checkbox. Reflection on AI use builds metacognitive awareness and makes the student's thinking process visible.

Tip 4: Evaluate Your AI Tools Before You Use Them

You've got your pedagogy in place. You've thought about your assessments, what evidence you need and how to collect it. You've co-built a classroom AI agreement with your students. Now comes a question that's easy to rush past: which tools are you actually going to use, and why those ones?

The number of AI tools marketed to teachers grows every week. Some are genuinely useful. Others are flashy demos wrapped around thin functionality. And a few raise serious concerns about data privacy, bias, or accessibility that aren't visible from a landing page. You can't pick a tool and drop it into your classroom just because a colleague recommended it or because it looked good in a two-minute demo. The same intentionality you've been applying to your pedagogy and your assessments needs to apply here too.

I've drawn on existing evaluation frameworks from UNESCO (Miao et al., 2021), the OECD (2025), aiEDU (2024), and ISTE (2023) to help you build your own evaluation rubric. The table below gives you eight dimensions to consider before adopting any AI tool, each with guiding questions you can ask yourself, your administration, or the tool's developers. Not every dimension will carry equal weight in every context.

A free tool used for a single activity doesn't need the same cost analysis as a district-wide platform adoption. But running through these dimensions before you commit will save you from discovering problems after your students are already using the tool.

Think of this as a pre-flight checklist. You don't skip it because the sky looks clear.

AI Tool Evaluation Rubric

Dimension	Key Questions
Ease of Use	Is the tool intuitive for both you and your students? Can users get started with minimal training? Does it integrate with platforms you already use (e.g., your LMS, Google Workspace)?
Educational Value	Does the tool align with your curriculum objectives and learning goals? Does it support deeper understanding, or does it just automate surface-level tasks? Can it be used across subjects?
Effectiveness	Does the tool consistently deliver on what it promises? Is there evidence of improved student learning or engagement? How reliable are its outputs?
Data Privacy & Security	What student data does the tool collect, and how is it stored and used? Does it comply with relevant privacy regulations (e.g., FERPA, GDPR) and your institution's policies? Is the company's privacy policy clear and accessible?
Ethical Standards	Does the tool include features to mitigate bias? How transparent is it about how it generates content or makes decisions? What accountability exists if the tool produces harmful or biased outputs?
Accessibility	Is the tool accessible to students with varying abilities, including those with disabilities? Does it align with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles? Are there accommodations for visual, auditory, or motor impairments?
Cost-Effectiveness	Is the pricing reasonable for what the tool offers? Are there hidden costs (subscriptions, upgrades, required training)? Does the free version offer enough functionality, or is the paywall where the real features live?
Customization & Adaptability	Can the tool be adapted to different learning needs, teaching styles, and content areas? Does it allow you to adjust difficulty levels, content, or interface? Can it keep pace as your goals or curriculum change?

Conclusion

I hope this guide gives you a useful starting point for making informed decisions about AI in your classroom. The four tips I've covered here, building your AI pedagogy, co-creating a classroom AI agreement, rethinking assessment for the AI era, and evaluating tools before adopting them, are areas where intentional planning makes a real difference. None of them require technical expertise. All of them require the kind of pedagogical thinking you already do every day.

AI in education is still a moving target. The tools will keep changing, the research will keep growing, and the questions we're asking now will lead to new ones we haven't thought of yet. What won't change is the need for teachers who approach this technology with purpose and with their students' learning at the center of every decision.

I write regularly about AI tools and practical recommendations for teachers on my blog Educators Technology at educatorstechnology.com. If you're interested in the academic research side, I cover the latest studies and policy documents on AI in education on my academic blog at medkharbach.com. Both are free and updated frequently, and I'd be glad to have you as a reader.

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