

Classifying AI use in writing for publication

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As with nearly all fields, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in writing is controversial and evolving. Part of the challenge is a lack of taxonomy for the various ways AI can be used to prepare manuscripts for publication. The International Association of Scientific, Technical, and Medical Publishers, known as STM, aims to address this issue with its September 2025 report: *Recommendations for a classification of AI use in academic manuscript preparation*.

The report aims to help publishers develop AI-related policies, so it's important for authors to know about the classification. Although most journals now require authors to disclose AI use (except for basic spelling and grammar checking), the guidance for doing so can prove confusing because it's frequently too vague. The STM system may help publishers and journal editors create clearer policies that are more useful for authors.

Nine activities

Here are the nine recommended classifications of AI activities listed in the report. They apply only to preparing a manuscript for publication, not the use of AI in research.

1. Refining, correcting, editing, or formatting the manuscript to improve clarity of language
2. Writing or drafting manuscript content
3. Translating manuscript text for the purpose of publishing

4. Refining or formatting data reported in the manuscript
5. Generating, refining, correcting, editing, or formatting images, diagrams, or other figures for illustrative purposes only
6. Generating, refining, correcting, editing, or formatting visualizations of research data or results
7. Refining or formatting code reported in the submitted manuscript
8. Assisting with gathering references
9. Presenting any kind of content generated by AI tools as though it were original research data/results from non-machine sources.

A closer look

Each classification includes a description of the activity, examples of the activity, and what the activity does NOT include. Here is the information for "Refining, correcting, editing, or formatting the manuscript to improve clarity of language":

Description of the activity: Machine tools were used to suggest language improvements within the manuscript.

Examples of the activity: Using spell checkers, grammar checkers, and similar tools to refine text written primarily by humans

What the activity does NOT include: Using AI tools to generate text from prompts or generate summaries of text; using AI tools to analyze or summarize textual documents as part of the research process.

Read the [report](#) for complete information on each of the nine classifications.

Looking ahead

The STM classification isn't the only one available. Others include the Generative Artificial Intelligence Delegation Taxonomy ([GAIDeT](#)), which addresses the use of AI in research projects as well as manuscript preparation. It's likely that the dif-

ferent groups will collaborate in refining classification systems.

As authors, we need to watch for developments in this area. Above all, remember that you can avoid manuscript rejection due to failure to disclose your AI use by being transparent and adhering to journal guidelines. AI can be a helpful tool—when used appropriately. ■

Cynthia Saver, MS, RN, is editor of the award-winning book *Anatomy of Writing for Publication for Nurses*, 5th ed. She has more than three decades of publishing experience as a writer, editor, and publishing executive. Cynthia's work has appeared in many journals, and her past positions include editorial director for *American Nurse Journal*, which she helped launch. Cynthia is passionate about helping nurses share their expertise by writing for publication and happily shares her knowledge through *The Writing Mind* blog, articles, short presentations, and workshops.

References

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