Guidance on the Use of AI in competitions and creative public submissions

What you need to know

- The BBC wants creative submissions to reflect meaningful human creativity: the core ideas, substantial creative effort and distinctive creative choices should come from you.
- AI can generally be used for limited practical, technical and accessibility support, such as spellchecking, formatting, transcription, captions or minor technical adjustments.
- AI should not normally be used to generate, develop or substantially change the creative content of your submission, unless the particular scheme explicitly allows this.
- You may be asked to explain how AI was used. You remain responsible for your final submission and for respecting other people's rights.
- Always check the terms and conditions for the particular competition, scheme or call for submissions. They may contain more specific requirements, and those requirements apply to your submission.

About this guidance

Since generative AI tools became widely accessible, debate about their role in creative work has intensified. Alongside this, we recognise that AI tools are increasingly being used by audiences and in the creative industries. These tools can support parts of the creative process, but they also raise important questions about authorship, originality, transparency, fairness and rights.

This guidance sets out the BBC's general approach to the use of AI when we invite members of the public to submit creative work, including through competitions, talent schemes and other creative calls for submissions, for example BBC Writers submission windows and Blue Peter badge applications.

The guidance does not cover commissions, recruitment and job applications, or news or factual submissions. Different editorial requirements apply to those submissions – speak to your commissioner or contact the local team for more information.

Always check the information and terms and conditions for the particular BBC scheme, competition or call for submissions, as these will explain any specific requirements that apply.

Our position

Human creativity is at the heart of what the BBC does, and that will not change. We remain committed to championing human talent and distinctive creative voices, in line with the BBC's mission, public purposes and editorial values.

When the BBC invites or assesses creative work from members of the public, our approach to AI use is underpinned by the BBC AI Principles, particularly our commitments to human creativity, transparency and respecting rights.

This is an evolving area, and we will continue to review this guidance as technology, creative practice and expectations develop.

What we mean by AI and generative AI

Generative AI refers to tools that generate text, images, speech, music, video and code in response to prompts from a user. These tools can create, transform or substantially edit a story, script, poem, song, artwork, image, voice, video sequence, character, plot outline or other creative material.

Generative AI tools are more likely than other types of AI to affect meaningful human creativity because they can generate material that forms part of, or substantially changes, a creative work.

AI is also increasingly embedded in everyday software and can perform practical, technical or accessibility tasks. Examples include spellchecking, grammar checking, transcription, captions, formatting, accessibility support, noise reduction and minor technical adjustments.

The important distinction is therefore not simply whether AI has been used, but what role it has played in the work and whether it has contributed to the creative substance that the scheme is asking you to produce yourself.

Human creativity

We are looking for submissions that demonstrate meaningful human creativity: where the core ideas, substantial creative effort and distinctive creative choices come from you.

AI may be used to support your work, but it should not replace your creative effort, judgement or control.

You are responsible for your final submission and should be able to explain how your work was created if asked.

Generally acceptable uses

The examples below describe AI uses that are generally acceptable; however, you must always check the terms and conditions for the specific scheme, application or competition you are submitting to. Where relevant, scheme-specific guidance and examples will explain what is and is not allowed for that scheme or competition.

Examples of acceptable AI use include:

- checking spelling, grammar or punctuation, provided the tool is correcting errors rather than rewriting your work
- formatting text or preparing a file for submission
- transcribing your own speech or adding captions
- making minor technical adjustments to audio, images or video without altering the meaning, such as cleaning up sound, cropping, resizing or correcting lighting
- accessibility support, such as dictation, screen readers, speech-to-text or text-to-speech tools
- helping you organise your notes or check that you have followed the submission rules, provided that the tool is not generating new creative material or reshaping the work for you.

Uses that are not acceptable

It would not be acceptable to ask an AI tool to generate ideas, write, compose, translate, answer a question, design or heavily edit a story, script, poem, lyrics, artwork, photograph, image, music, voice, audio, video or other creative submission and submit that as your own work.

By “heavily edit”, we mean AI use that changes the substance of the work rather than simply helping with presentation. For example, this includes asking AI to rewrite sections, reshape the plot or structure, create characters, develop the argument, produce distinctive dialogue, transform the style, generate visual concepts, compose musical material, synthesise a voice, or make other major creative choices.

Nor would it be acceptable to rely on AI to decide key elements such as the concept, title, plot, structure, characters, lyrics, melody, visual style, voice, performance, edit, sequence or any creative choices (including giving feedback).

A particular scheme may explicitly permit some uses that would otherwise fall into these categories. Where it does, this should be made clear in its terms and conditions.

Transparency

Openness about how work has been created helps us treat entrants consistently and maintain trust.

Where relevant, we may ask whether AI tools were used and what they were used for; this will be made clear as part of the submission process. If you are asked, you should provide accurate information about the role AI played.

Being transparent about AI use does not automatically make that use acceptable; the use must still comply with the rules of the scheme.

Where further information is needed, we may ask you to explain your creative process. If you cannot provide particular information or material, that does not in itself prove that prohibited AI was used, but the scheme may need to consider whether it has enough information to determine whether the submission meets its rules.

Respecting rights and protecting your work

When you submit work to the BBC, you are responsible for ensuring that it is your original work and that it does not make inappropriate use of someone else's protected material or break the law. This includes respecting copyright, performers' rights and other intellectual property rights, as well as avoiding the unauthorised use of someone else's image, voice or personal data.

If you use anyone else's material or content in your submission, you must have the necessary permission to do so.

Be careful when putting your ideas, drafts, scripts, images, performances or other creative material into publicly available AI tools. Depending on the tool and its terms, your prompts or uploaded content may be used to improve the service or may not remain under your control. Check the tool's terms and privacy settings before using it.

Individual competitions and schemes

This guidance sets out the BBC's general approach; however, individual competitions and schemes may set different or more specific requirements depending on what is being submitted, what is being assessed and how the work will be used.

Always check the terms and conditions for the scheme you are entering. If there is any difference between this general guidance and the rules for a particular scheme, the scheme's terms and conditions apply to that submission.