

Bridging the AI Gap in Writing and Research: From Classroom to Modern Practice

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Current AI Knowledge Gap

The Assumption

Attorneys may assume new lawyers are "digital natives" with an innate, professional mastery of technology, such as AI.

The Reality

Because of the fast evolution of AI in practice and the slow adoption of AI in law schools, current students may be getting their AI education in practice.

23.6% of law students feel law school prepared them to work with AI.



Source: *Bridging the AI Readiness Gap: A 360-Degree Assessment of the Needs of Law Schools, Students, and Employers.*

Current Tension in Legal Education

"Law schools will face related questions and challenges. In the short term, they will have to grapple with how to assess student performance on exams and papers now that students have easy access to AI tools."

— Andrew Perlman, Dean, Suffolk University School of Law and Vice President for Academic Innovation, Suffolk University

"The analytical habits that define legal competence . . . are built through repeated engagement with difficult material, not through efficient delegation of that material to a machine."

— University of Minnesota Law School Study: *Artificial Intelligence and Human Legal Reasoning*

"Gen Z remains unconvinced that AI enhances creativity, critical thinking or even efficiency. The majority believe AI-driven efficiency may come at a cost, particularly to learning."

— Gallup Poll, *The Voices of Gen Z, the AI Paradox*

Student Attitudes Toward Generative AI

- 14% Enthusiastic
- 32% Neutral
- 30% Skeptical
- 24% Not sure

— LWI Study: *Generative AI Results Survey*

1L Legal Writing Skills Course

Ethical + Legal Concerns regarding Gen AI education

Accuracy of AI-generated information **100%**

Competency in practice of law **98.6%**

Confidentiality + Privacy **94.5%**

Yet, 84% of respondents incorporated some form of AI education into their classroom last year.

Behind the Scenes: Foundational Challenges



Pandemic Impact

Educational losses from asynchronous and online learning have impacted core critical thinking skills.



Underprepared

New students may arrive with less developed analytical building blocks than those 20 years ago due to educational trends.



Prior Gen AI Reliance

Massive AI usage for high school and college foundational courses.

Fixing the AI Readiness Gap

Back to Basics with Students



Prohibit Gen AI Use

Build students' core legal research, writing, and analytical abilities first.



Focus on Core Competencies

Go deep with key legal skills, such as reading and understanding case law to applying rules.

Faculty Responsibilities



Become Gen AI Literate

Understand AI tools to ensure students actually learn core legal skills and prepare students for practice expectations.



Prepare Students for Variable Access

Train students to meet employer expectations of AI use, which may include required use AI to a prohibition on or lack of AI tools.

The Bridge to Practice

Training Law Students for an AI-Integrated Legal Landscape

"97% of law firms have already implemented AI policies and 84% permit new associates to use generative AI tools for legal research. Only **3% of law schools** require AI coursework, leaving a critical gap in preparing students for the workforce."

Source: Bridging the AI Readiness Gap: A 360-Degree Assessment of the Needs of Law Schools, Students, and Employers, (April 2026).

Supervised Integration of AI

After the foundation is built, then AI is incorporated into the curriculum.



Capabilities & Limitations

Show AI possibilities and pitfalls, using familiar case files and law.



A Useful Tool, Not the Answer

Train students to treat AI as a supportive tool rather than a definitive source.



Ethical Practice

Incorporate legal ethics on the use of AI.



Real World Use Cases

Show real world illustrations of lawyers making AI usage errors.



Instill a Desire to Learn

Emphasize duty to continually adapt to evolving AI usage and abilities.

Conclusion

When your law clerks or your new attorneys start this year, do not assume that they have an innate understanding of AI.

Reinforce and Train

You will want to reinforce and train them on what your firm's expectations are, what limitations exist, and how to effectively use AI tools for your practice.

Learning Together

Given AI's rapid evolution, you may be learning on new AI tools in real time with them too.

Sources

Listed in order of recency:

- Nicholas Bednar et al., *Artificial Intelligence and Human Legal Reasoning* (April 05, 2026), Minnesota Legal Studies Research Paper 2026-21. [\(Link to SSRN Paper\)](#).
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- Geoffrey Kehlmann and Amy Levin, *Kill the Memo*, Paper No. 2026-01, (February 01, 2026). [\(Link to Paper\)](#)
- The Illinois Supreme Court Policy on Artificial Intelligence. [\(Link to Policy\)](#)
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- ABA Formal Opinion 512, *Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools*, (July 29, 2024). [\(Link to Opinion\)](#)
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Additional Reading

Listed in order of recency:

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- Linzie Kane, *Attorney and Law Firm in Chicago Housing Authority Sanctioned nearly \$60,000 for using ChatGPT in Court Case,* Chicago Sun-Times, Dec. 9 2025.
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- Megan E. Boyd and Brian L. Frye, *The Duty of Efficiency & Generative AI Pedagogy,* 77 Wash. U. J. L. & Pol'y 96 (2025).