



C U R A T E D S T R E A M 1

Introduction to Generative AI

A welcoming first look at the tools changing how we work and learn.

What are generative AI tools?

Generative AI tools are advanced systems that create new outputs — text, images, code, audio, video — based on the inputs you give them.

They act like a versatile virtual assistant: helping you write, brainstorm, summarise, analyse, plan, and learn — across almost every industry.

In 2026 the most familiar names are ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, and Copilot — but the field is much wider, and growing every month.



Text & chat



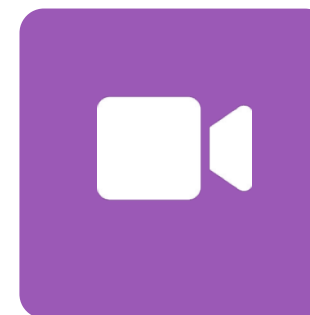
Images



Code



Audio



Video



Documents

Where is generative AI being used?



Entertainment

Story outlines, scripts, concept art.



Design

Custom graphics, mood boards, brand assets.



Finance

Drafting reports, modelling forecasts.



Legal

Summarising cases and contracts.



Retail

Product descriptions, virtual try-on.



Marketing

Social posts, ad copy, campaign drafts.



Healthcare

Summarising notes, patient-friendly explanations.



Education

Tutors, study guides, lesson plans.



Manufacturing

Optimising schedules, drafting SOPs.



Automotive

Component design and prototyping.

Which tools we'll explore today

There are countless generative AI tools, and more arrive every month. In this stream we focus on the three most-used chat assistants of 2026 — easy to try, free to start, and broadly representative.

ChatGPT

OpenAI

GPT-5.6

Default chat assistant in 2026. Strong for writing, brainstorming and creative tasks. Now uses GPT-5.6 with current-world knowledge.

Gemini

Google

Gemini 3.5 Flash

Connected to the web; deep multimodal understanding (text, images, video, audio). Best when you need fresh information.

Claude

Anthropic

Fable 5 · Opus 4.8 · Sonnet 5 · Haiku 4.5

Excellent for long documents, careful explanations, agents and step-by-step reasoning. Used widely in education.

Activity overview

Three short hands-on tasks to feel the difference between the tools.

What you'll try

To explore the capabilities of ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude, you'll do three things:



Have a conversation

Ask each tool a question about a topic that interests you and compare the answers.



Generate a short story

Give the tools a creative prompt and see how their styles differ.



Spot the limits

Find places where the tools are unsure, out of date, or simply wrong — and learn to check.

These aren't the only things these tools can do — but they're a great place to start.

Getting set up

Open these three tools in separate browser tabs. On NAIS laptops they're pinned to the Chrome favourites bar — sign-in is pre-populated.

ChatGPT

chatgpt.com

Gemini

gemini.google.com

Claude

claude.ai



Tip: keep all three open side-by-side

Asking the same question in each makes it easy to compare answers. Different tools, different strengths — you'll see this throughout the activity.

Write a simple question

Activity 1 of 3

Ask each tool a simple question

All three assistants have a chat box at the bottom of the screen. Type a question and press enter.

Try this prompt

“What is Nelson, New Zealand, known for?”

Run it in ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude. Read each answer carefully.

New word

Prompt

A prompt is the question or instruction you give an AI assistant.

Better prompts → better answers. You'll practise this throughout the stream.

Heads-up: every tool answers a little differently — that's the whole point of the exercise.

Three tools, three answers

ChatGPT

- Sunshine capital — over 2,400 sunshine hours a year
- Arts, crafts, World of WearableArt
- Wineries, craft beer, apples and kiwifruit
- Abel Tasman National Park nearby

Gemini

- Sunshine and beaches
- National parks (Abel Tasman, Nelson Lakes, Kahurangi)
- Includes a recent web link
- Lists local cafés and events

Claude

- Sunny climate and outdoor lifestyle
- Strong arts community and weekly markets
- Gateway to Top of the South
- Carefully hedges anything time-sensitive

Why are the answers different?

Each tool predicts the next word from patterns in its training data. Like asking three people the same question, you'll get three styles — but the core answer should overlap. Always check facts that matter.

Write a detailed question

Activity 2 of 3

More detail = better answers

To get the response you want, give the tool as much useful context as you can: who you are, what you want, and any constraints.

Vague prompt

“Tell me about Nelson.”

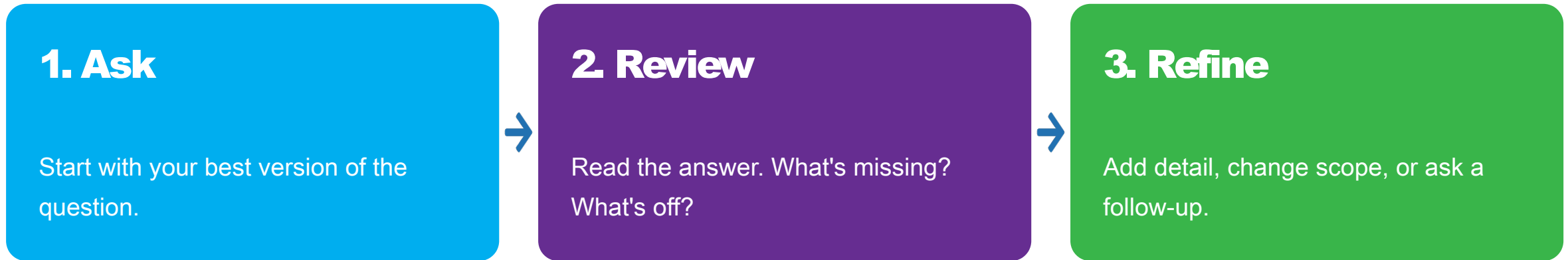
- Generic list of facts
- May miss what you actually need
- Doesn't match your situation

Detailed prompt

“We're in Nelson, NZ for three days. We love the outdoors and want to visit some restaurants and museums. Suggest a balanced itinerary.”

- Tailored itinerary that fits your time
- Mix of activities — outdoors + food + culture
- Often groups by day or theme

Don't stop at the first answer



Repeat until the answer is useful. This is called iterating.

A reminder that's worth repeating

These models generate what “seems” right based on patterns — they don't always know what's true. Always sanity-check anything that matters before you use it.

Understanding the limits

Activity 3 of 3

Test the limits with a fresh question

These prompts often reveal differences in how each tool handles very recent or local information:

Prompt A — current info

“What are five restaurants open in Nelson today for me to eat at?”

Prompt B — official number

“What is the current Official Cash Rate in New Zealand?”

What to look for

- Does the tool admit it doesn't know, or guess?
- Does it cite a source or web link?
- Does it offer to look it up rather than answer from memory?

Web-connected vs. offline answers

Most 2026 assistants can browse the web when needed, but each one decides differently. Older free tiers might not browse at all.

Connected to the web

Will fetch fresh information for things like opening hours, latest news, or live prices.

- Gemini — always web-connected by default
- ChatGPT (2026) — browses when it's useful
- Claude — can use web search; opt-in for some plans

Answering from training

Will answer from what it learnt during training. Great for general knowledge, but can be out of date or make things up.

- Useful for: writing, brainstorming, explaining concepts
- Risky for: prices, dates, news, opening hours
- Always sanity-check facts that matter

When AI “makes things up”

Hallucination

When an AI gives an answer that sounds confident and reasonable — but is partly or completely wrong.

It happens because these models predict what words usually come next — they don't “know” facts the way you do.

All current models — Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini — can hallucinate. They are getting better, but never zero.

Common ways it shows up

Made-up facts

Quoting a statistic, date or law that doesn't exist.

Fake citations

Inventing a book, paper or article title that sounds real.

Confident guessing

Filling gaps with plausible-sounding detail.

Old information

Treating last-year facts as if they're still current.

Going further

Beyond simple chat — what else can these tools do?

Creative writing

All three tools are strong creative collaborators. Give them a clear brief and they'll draft a story, poem, email or speech in seconds.

Try this prompt

“Write me a 300-word story about pirates for my 5-year-old that encourages him to brush his teeth.”

Run the same prompt in each tool. Compare the tone, length, and how each one handles “for a 5-year-old”.

Where each tool shines

ChatGPT

Playful, energetic, easy to remix.

Gemini

Structured, well-paced; good with formats.

Claude

Warmer voice; careful with sensitive topics.

Beyond chat: attaching files and images

In 2026 all three assistants can also read documents and look at images. It's one of the most useful everyday features.



Read a document

Drop in a PDF, slide deck, Word file or notes. Ask: "Summarise this in three bullets" or "Explain page 4 in plain language".

Strong on Claude · works in ChatGPT & Gemini too



Look at an image

Attach a photo, diagram or chart. Ask: "What does this graph show?" or "What's in this picture?"

Strong on Gemini · works in ChatGPT & Claude too

Summary — what you've seen

Each tool has its own strengths

- Claude — explaining documents, careful reasoning
- ChatGPT — creative writing, open-ended ideas
- Gemini — fresh information, image understanding

All three are improving fast. The right tool depends on the job — and often it's worth trying a couple.

Habits to take with you

01

Give context

Who you are, what you want, any limits.

02

Iterate

Refine the prompt. The first answer is rarely the best.

03

Compare

Run the same prompt in two tools when it matters.

04

Fact-check

Anything that matters — verify before you use it.

Prompt starters to try

Use these as a launching point. Pick one, fill in the blanks, and decide which tool feels right for the job.

1 Discuss the causes and effects of _____.

3 Discuss the major themes in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

5 Create a list of 10 educational YouTube channels covering _____ for self-paced learning.

7 Write a professional email to a _____ discussing _____.

9 Identify the relationship between _____ and _____.

2 Explain the impact of _____ on _____.

4 How can I use _____ to help me _____?

6 Compare these two articles: _____.

8 Predict future trends in _____.

10 Explore the latest innovations in the _____ industry.

Remember to add detail, then iterate — and fact-check the results.

You've finished Curated Stream 1.

Next up: explore prompting techniques, image generation, AI in coding, and more.

Nelson AI Sandbox · aisandbox.org.nz