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Young people's use of generative AI to support literacy in 2025

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In 2025, we wanted to increase our understanding of how generative AI tools might be beginning to influence what it means to be literate in the digital age.

We first asked children and young people about their awareness and use of generative AI platforms in our Annual Literacy Survey in early 2023, shortly after the launch of ChatGPT-3 in late 2022. Since that time, many more generative AI tools have emerged, and we included a broader range of questions on AI in our Annual Literacy Survey in early 2024.

Our first report, published in the summer of 2024, noted a rapid increase in awareness and use of generative AI tools over the previous year, as well as varying attitudes towards their use[1]. For example, while 2 in 5 young people said they added their own thoughts to AI outputs in 2024, 1 in 5 admitted that they did not check these outputs in case they were wrong. Teacher surveys at the time also presented a mixed picture, with many teachers open to the potential of generative AI for supporting aspects of literacy (such as modelling good writing) but with others concerned about potential negative impacts of these tools on young people's critical thinking and engagement with learning.

In 2025, we wanted to deepen our understanding of how generative AI tools might influence what it means to be literate in the digital age. This report builds on our initial findings by looking in more depth at how young people might be using AI to support different aspects of the writing and reading process, as well as asking young people about their attitudes and behaviours when using these tools, and their perceptions of the value of learning to write in the age of AI.

Young people's use of generative AI to support literacy in 2025

We asked more than 60,000 children and young people aged 13 to 18 from schools across the UK who took part in our Annual Literacy Survey about their use of, and attitudes to, generative AI to support literacy and learning in 2025. This report focuses mainly on the 32,757 young people who told us that they used generative AI (see Appendix 1 for more information on methodology and sample) and is complemented by a companion report on teachers' use of AI in 2025[2].

[1] https://literacytrust.org.uk/research-services/research-reports/children-young-people-and-teachers-use-of-generative-ai-to-support-literacy-in-2024/

[2] Picton., I & Clark, C. (2025) *Teachers' use of generative AI to support literacy*, National Literacy Trust

Use of generative AI in 2025 in young people aged 13 to 18

In 2025, we saw some consolidation in generative AI use among young people, with fewer of those aged 13 to 18 using it overall compared with the previous year, but more of those who did use it were doing so regularly:

- Almost all (96.9%) young people said they had heard of generative AI in 2025, and 2 in 3 (66.5%) said they had used it. This represents a decrease from last year when 77.1% had used it, with the decrease driven by lower levels of use in those aged 13 to 16.
    - In 2025, more young people aged 16 to 18 reported using generative AI (70.6%) than their younger peers (aged 13 to 16; 66.1%).
    - A similar percentage of boys and girls (65.9% vs 67.3%) and those who did and did not receive free school meals (FSMs) said they had used generative AI (66.7% FSM vs 67.0% non-FSM).
- While fewer young people aged 13 to 18 said they had used generative AI overall in 2025, more reported using it regularly (i.e. weekly or more often) compared with 2024 (45.6% vs 31.1%[3]).
    - More older teens (those aged 16 to 18) than younger teens (13 to 16) used AI weekly or more often (52.0% vs 44.9%).
    - Slightly more boys than girls (48.4% vs 42.6%), and slightly fewer young people who received FSMs compared with their peers who did not (45.1% vs 48.3%) used generative AI weekly or more often.

Young people's motivations for using generative AI in 2025

- In 2025, the most popular uses of generative AI among young people who used it at least once a month were to ask questions (61.2%), to get help with homework (60.9%) and for entertainment (52.8%).
    - More girls than boys reported using AI for help with homework (66.4% vs 56.2%), while more boys than girls used it to create images (33.1% vs 21.7%).
    - More of those aged 16 to 18 than 13 to 16 said they had used generative AI for inspiration (50.5% vs 39.1%) or for help with homework (70.4% vs 59.8%).

Using generative AI to support writing and reading in 2025

Many young people used generative AI to support aspects of writing, with uses ranging from improving vocabulary and checking spelling to more creative or interactive purposes, such as developing characters or getting feedback:

[3] We didn't ask young people about how frequently they used generative AI in 2023

- The most popular use of AI to support writing was to improve vocabulary, with 2 in 5 (39.5%) young people saying they had used it to suggest better words to use, while 1 in 3 (35.2%) used it to check spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- 1 in 5 had used AI to get feedback on how their writing could be better (20.7%) or to turn their own ideas into a story (19.3%). In addition, 1 in 6 (17.0%) said they had used it to help with brainstorming or outlining ideas and 1 in 7 (15.1%) for help with story elements such as characters, plot and dialogue.
    - More young people who enjoyed writing used AI to support almost all aspects of the writing process, suggesting keen writers used these tools to enrich a practice they already enjoyed. For example, twice as many of those who enjoyed writing used AI to help with characters, plot and dialogue (26.6% vs 11.7%).
    - At the same time, while young people who did not enjoy writing were most likely to say they had used AI to find better words (36.7%) or check spelling (30.3%), 1 in 5 (18.0%) had also asked for feedback on how their writing could be better.

Fewer young people reported using generative AI to support their reading. The most popular reasons were to learn the meaning of a word (35.4%) or to summarise a text (33.0%). Only 1 in 10 (9.8%) had used it to recommend reading material based on their interests.

- A higher percentage of older (16 to 18s) than younger teens (13 to 16s) used AI to summarise texts (45.5% vs 31.5%) or to provide different interpretations of a text (19.1% vs 10.1%), possibly reflecting increased demands around reading and analysing texts at a higher educational stage.
- As with writing, more young people who enjoyed reading had used generative AI to support most aspects of reading. For example, almost three times as many of those who enjoyed reading asked for reading recommendations compared with those who did not enjoy reading (17.7% vs 6.5%).

Young people's attitudes when using generative AI in 2025

Alongside overall use of generative AI, we were interested in learning how young people use these tools, and to what extent their use was critical or reflective:

- In 2025, 1 in 2 (48.9%) young people told us that when they used AI, they usually added their own thoughts into the outputs, while 2 in 5 (42.8%) told us they checked generative AI outputs as they could be wrong. However, 1 in 4 (25.1%) admitted to 'just copying' AI outputs when using it for homework.
    - Concerningly, the percentage of young people who told us they just copied AI outputs has increased over the last year, rising from 20.9% in 2024 to 25.1% in 2025.

- Compared with those aged 13 to 16, more of those aged 16 to 18 added their own thoughts to AI outputs (69.3% vs 46.5%) and checked for mistakes (58.5% vs 40.9%), while fewer just copied what AI told them (10.0% vs 26.8%).
- More young people who enjoyed reading or writing told us that they added their own thoughts to AI outputs compared with those who did not (reading: 59.9% vs 44.1%; writing: 58.3% vs 46.1%). Conversely, more of those who didn't enjoy these activities said that they simply copied AI responses, especially in relation to reading enjoyment (reading: 28.6% vs 17.0%; writing: 25.9% vs 22.0%).

- We also wanted to explore perceptions of the value of learning to write in the age of AI in 2025. 2 in 3 (65.5%) young people aged 13 to 18 agreed with the statement, "Even when we have AI, it is important to learn how to write."
  - Notably, more girls than boys (70.1% vs 60.8%) agreed with this statement, as did a higher number of older than younger teens (80.9% of those aged 16 to 18 vs 63.6% of those aged 13 to 16). Fewer young people receiving FSMs than not receiving FSMs agreed (61.1% vs 67.1%).
- Importantly, 1 in 2 (50.8%) young people agreed that generative AI helped them to learn or understand things when their parents and teachers weren't around. However, just 1 in 6 (15.5%) felt more independent when using AI for writing or reading, suggesting a greater sense of reliance when using it to support literacy than when using it to support learning.
  - There were few differences in agreement with these statements by gender. However, more of those aged 16 to 18 than 13 to 16 agreed that AI helped them learn when adults weren't around (64.7% vs 49.2%), as did more of those who did not receive FSMs than those who did (52.2% vs 46.4%).

These findings suggest that, based on the more regular use of generative AI among certain groups (such as those aged 16 to 18, boys and, to a lesser extent, those who do not receive FSMs), some young people may be becoming more adept at using these tools in 2025. In addition, more young people who already enjoyed writing and reading told us they had used generative AI to support more interactive practices in these areas (such as providing feedback, ideation or help with story elements), suggesting that enjoyment motivated deeper levels of engagement with AI tools. At the same time, some young people who did not enjoy writing told us they used AI to get feedback on how their writing could be better, indicating the potential for these tools to support young people with lower levels of engagement. Indeed, this group may benefit the most from greater support and training on how to use these tools in this way.

As well as exploring *why* young people use generative AI, we were interested in *how* they were using it, and to what extent their use was informed, critical and reflective. In this area, there is perhaps some cause for concern, as a higher percentage of young people reported 'just copying' AI outputs for homework in 2025. Fewer younger teens reported evaluating,

verifying and adding their own thoughts to AI outputs, while more of their older peers used it to enhance, rather than replace, learning. This suggests more should be done to emphasise the value of developing strong independent learning and writing skills in younger age groups. Taken together, these findings emphasise the importance of supporting all young people to learn how to interact effectively and reflectively with AI technologies.

Young people's use of generative AI to support literacy in 2025

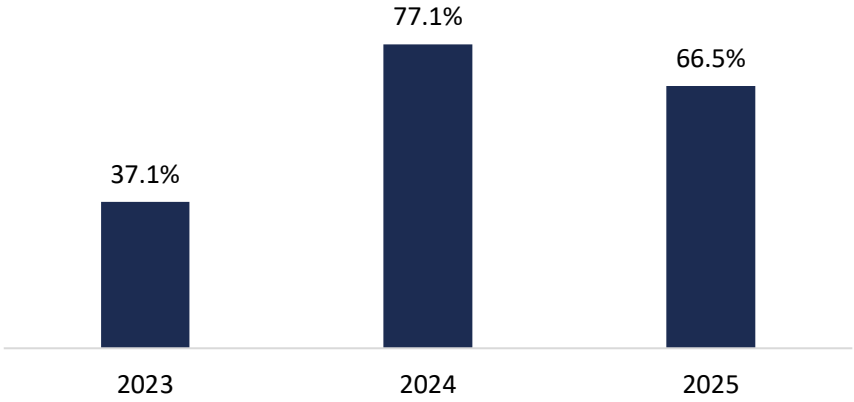
Use of generative AI in young people aged 13 to 18

In 2025, we asked the 63,810 young people aged 13 to 18 taking part in our Annual Literacy Survey to answer questions about whether they had heard of, and used, generative AI (including ChatGPT, Bing Chat, Character AI, Google Gemini or Snapchat My AI). Just 3.1% of young people who answered our questions about generative AI[4] said they had not heard of it, meaning 96.9% had. Of those who had heard of generative AI, 2 in 3 (66.5%) said they had used it, with the remainder saying either that they hadn't used it or they weren't sure.

Previous findings showed that the percentage of 13- to 18-year-olds taking part in our survey who reported using generative AI increased from 37.1% in 2023 to 77.1% in 2024 (see Figure 1) but decreased by 10.6 percentage points between 2024 and 2025, with 2 in 3 (66.5%) young people aged 13 to 18 saying they had used AI this year. This is similar to other UK surveys, which found that 59% of those aged 13 to 17 had used AI in 2025[5].

[4] (n = 50,848)
[5] Ofcom. (2025). *Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report*

Figure 1: Percentage of young people aged 13 to 18 who told us they had used generative AI in 2023, 2024 and 2025



As shown in Table 1, this decrease was mainly driven by people at the younger end of the age range: 2 in 3 (66.1%) young people aged 13 to 16 told us they had used AI in 2025 compared with 4 in 5 (77.1%) in 2024. By contrast, there was almost no difference in use among those aged 16 to 18 over the last year, with 7 in 10 using AI in both 2024 and 2025 (72.2% and 70.6% respectively). This may suggest that in 2025 some younger teens feel less confident about – or have poorer experiences of – using AI tools than their older peers, something we hope to explore in the next stage of our research.

Other findings relating to AI use by demographic background were similar to 2024. For example, while in 2023 more boys than girls used generative AI, in both 2024 and 2025 there was almost no gender gap. An almost identical percentage of young people who did and did not receive FSMs said they used AI in 2024 and 2025. However, wider research has found evidence of a digital divide in AI use, with fewer children in C2DE households using AI than those in ABC1 households[6]. This may reflect differences in age groups included (the reports cited relate to ages 8 to 17 and 8 to 12 respectively, while our data relates to ages 13 to 18) and how data is gathered (i.e. information from parents or carers on household income or social grade versus children's awareness of receiving free school meals), as well as how questions are asked and interpreted[7].

[6] See, e.g. Ofcom. (2025). *Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report*; Hashem, Y., Esnaashari, S., Onslow, K., Chakraborty, S., Poletaev, A. & Francis, J. (2025). *Understanding the impacts of generative AI use on children*. Alan Turing Institute.

[7] Near-universal access to built-in AI tools, e.g. in smartphones, may mean that many young people aged 13 to 18 have used them almost 'by default'. However, digital divides also relate to outcomes of use of devices (see, e.g., Van Deursen & Helsper (2015). The Third-Level Digital Divide: Who Benefits Most from Being Online?)

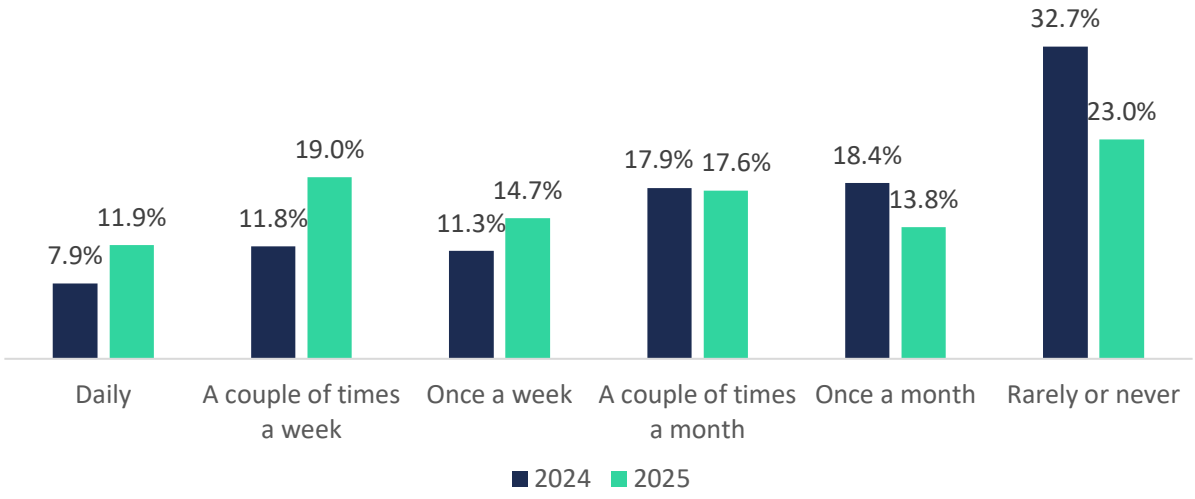
Table 1: Percentage of young people aged 13 to 18 who told us they had used generative AI in 2023, 2024 and 2025 by gender, age and free-school-meal uptake

	Gender		Age group			FSM uptake	
	Boy	Girl	13 to 18	13 to 16	16 to 18	FSM	Non-FSM
2023	40.3%	23.6%	37.1%	36.7%	45.3%	34.8%	37.7%
2024	78.3%	76.4%	77.1%	77.9%	72.2%	77.7%	77.3%
2025	65.9%	67.3%	66.5%	66.1%	70.6%	66.7%	67.0%

Frequency of generative AI use in 2025

While more young people aged 13 to 18 said they had used generative AI in 2024 than in 2025, few reported using it with any frequency last year; indeed, 1 in 3 said they used it 'rarely or never' (see Figure 2). By contrast, in 2025 a higher percentage of young people reported using it daily, a couple of times a week or weekly, with 45.6% reporting using it weekly or more often, compared with 31.1% in 2024[8]). In other words, while fewer young people used generative AI in 2025, more of those who used it were doing so more regularly.

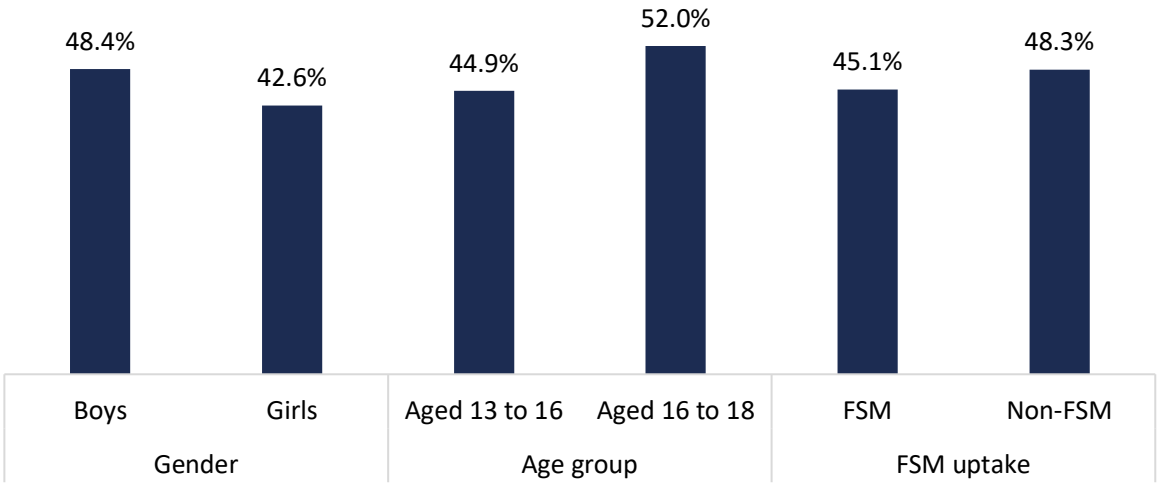
Figure 2: Frequency of use of generative AI for young people aged 13 to 18 in 2024 and 2025



[8] We didn't ask young people about how frequently they used generative AI in 2023

More boys than girls said they used generative AI at least once week in 2025 (see Figure 3). This has also been found in an Australian survey of young people aged 14 to 27, with men being more frequent users (64% using it weekly vs 53% of women)[9]. In addition, more of those aged 16 to 18 than those aged 13 to 16 and slightly more of those who did not receive FSMs than those who did told us they used generative AI at least once a week.

Figure 3: Use of generative AI weekly or more often in 2025 by gender, age and FSM status



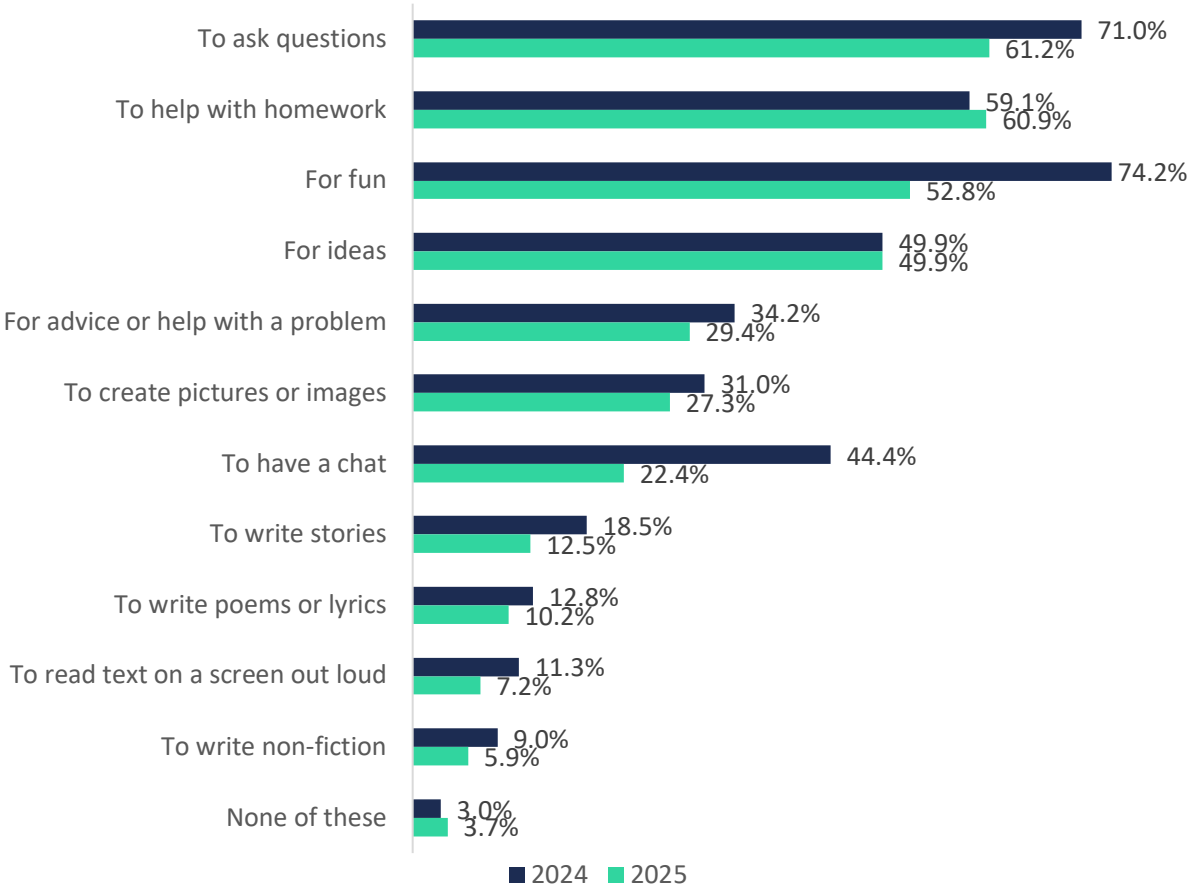
Motivations for using generative AI in 2025

Young people who used generative AI at least once a month were invited to share their main reasons for doing so in both 2024 and 2025. As shown in Figure 4, in 2025 curiosity, help with homework and entertainment were the top three reasons for using AI. 3 in 5 used it to ask questions or get help with their homework, and 1 in 2 used it for fun. Some purposes (including seeking advice for a problem, creating images and writing poems or lyrics) were relatively similar to 2024. However, using AI for fun, to generate ideas, to write stories, and particularly to have a chat, were less popular among young people aged 13 to 18 in 2025. Just 1 in 2 (52.8%) used AI for fun in 2025 compared with 3 in 4 in 2024, while the percentage of those in our sample saying they had used generative AI to have a chat halved between 2024 and 2025, decreasing from 44.4% to 22.4%[10].

[9] Insight Centre. (2025). *From Gen Z to GenAI: The impact, opportunities and challenges of Generative AI for young Australians.*

[10] Young people were simply asked if they had used AI 'to have a chat' in both 2024 and 2025, rather than if they had used an AI chatbot for another purpose. For a more detailed study of use of AI chatbots, see, e.g., Internet Matters. (2025). *Me, myself and AI: Understanding and safeguarding children's use of chatbots.*.

Figure 4: Motivations for using generative AI in young people aged 13 to 18 in 2024 and 2025



We added a new answer option in 2025: 'To write a script (e.g. for podcasts, YouTube or TikTok videos, plays or films).' 7.9% of young people said they had used generative AI for this, while in the comments for 'something else', a couple of young people added that they had used it to script games.

As shown in Table 2, there were some differences in use by gender and age. For example, more girls than boys reported using AI for homework and chatting, and more boys than girls used it to create images. More of those aged 16 to 18 than those aged 13 to 16 used generative AI for inspiration, help with homework and to ask questions. Differences by FSM status were slight in comparison, although research has found that more young people from ABC1 than C2DE households reported using AI 'to learn' (52% vs 34%) or 'for school' (51% vs 36%)[11].

[11] Ofcom. (2025). *Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report*, see earlier note (p6) on differences in how data on income is gathered.

Table 2: Young people's reasons for using generative AI by gender, age and FSM status in 2025

	Gender		Age group		FSM uptake	
	Boy	Girl	13 to 16	16 to 18	FSM	Non-FSM
To ask questions	58.8%	64.1%	60.1%	69.7%	58.9%	61.8%
To get help with homework	56.2%	66.4%	59.8%	70.4%	59.9%	61.4%
For fun	54.7%	50.2%	53.5%	47.1%	51.9%	53.0%
For ideas	39.4%	41.5%	39.1%	50.5%	38.5%	40.7%
For advice or help with a problem	26.6%	32.2%	28.5%	36.3%	28.2%	29.7%
To create pictures or images	33.1%	21.7%	27.8%	23.3%	24.3%	27.9%
To have a chat	17.8%	25.7%	23.7%	13.4%	24.5%	21.7%
To write stories	11.1%	13.3%	12.9%	8.8%	14.1%	12.0%
To write poems or lyrics	9.4%	10.6%	10.6%	6.4%	11.6%	9.8%
To write a script	9.7%	6.0%	8.3%	5.3%	9.6%	7.5%
To read text on a screen out loud	7.0%	7.3%	7.4%	5.8%	8.3%	7.0%
To write non-fiction	6.5%	5.1%	6.2%	3.6%	7.6%	5.5%

Using generative AI to support writing in 2025

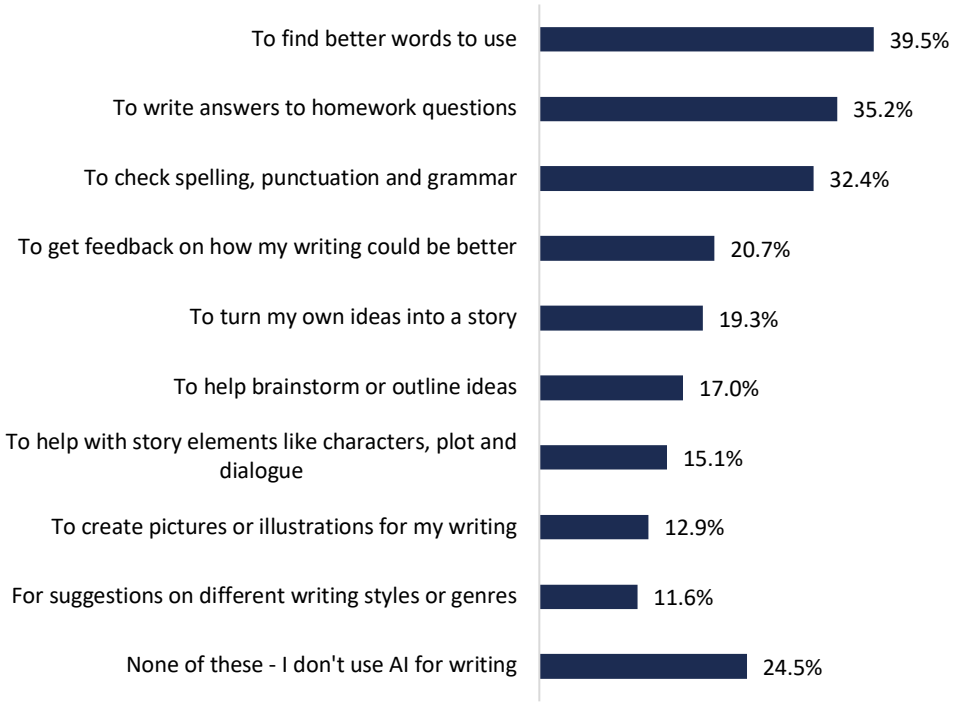
Generative AI has been described as "more than anything, a technology of writing"[12] and recent studies are beginning to explore the ways in which generative AI tools are being used to support various aspects of the writing process, including planning, drafting and revising[13].One recent study suggested that participants using Large Language Models (LLMs) at an early stage of the writing process showed poorer outcomes on measures of brain connectivity compared with those asked to use their own brain initially, before using AI to refine or complement their ideas. Authors suggested that by reducing cognitive load, using the external support of AI at an early stage may diminish "deeper creative and critical thinking processes" compared with writing without assistance or with the aid of a standard

[12] Kalantzis, M., & Cope, B. (2024). *Literacy in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*.
[13] See, e.g. Levine et al. (2025). *How do students use ChatGPT as a writing support?*

search engine[14]. While the final group was limited to a small sample of high-achieving adults (18), future studies in younger teens may make a valuable contribution to the evidence base for policymakers and educators working with this age group.

Our previous survey in 2024 found that 2 in 5 (39.6%) young people aged 13 to 18 said that generative AI helped them with writing. To explore this further, we asked young people who used generative AI at least once a month in 2025 about their practices in this area in more detail. As shown in Figure 5, most people used generative AI to improve their vocabulary, with 2 in 5 young people aged 13 to 18 saying they had used it to suggest better words to use. 1 in 3 young people had simply used AI to produce answers for homework, and a similar percentage had used it to check their spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Figure 5: Using generative AI to support aspects of the writing process



These more popular uses may not expand much on what is already offered by a dictionary, thesaurus or word-processing program. However, a smaller (but still sizeable) percentage of young people told us they had used generative AI for more complex and interactive purposes, including to get feedback on how their writing could be better, or to turn their own ideas into a story. In other words, they were using it as an integral part of the creative process. Relatedly, 1 in 6 said they had used AI to help with brainstorming or outlining ideas,

[14] Kosmyna, N., Hauptmann, E., Yuan, Y. T., Situ, J., Liao, X-H., Beresnitzky, A. V., Braunstein, I. & Maes, P. (2025). *Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task*

while 1 in 7 had used it for help with story elements such as characters, plot and dialogue. Few used generative AI to illustrate their work or to suggest different writing styles or genres. It is also worth noting that 1 in 4 AI users said they didn't use these tools for writing at all.

As shown in Table 3, there were some differences in the use of generative AI to support aspects of writing by gender and age. For example, more girls than boys and more of those aged 16 to 18 than 13 to 16 reported using AI to find better words to use. While more younger teens used AI to turn their ideas into a story, more of their older peers used it for brainstorming. However, differences by FSM status were marginal.

Table 3: Young people's reasons for using generative AI to support writing by gender, age and FSM status in 2025

	Gender		Age group		FSM uptake	
	Boy	Girl	13 to 16	16 to 18	FSM	Non-FSM
To find better words to use	33.4%	46.0%	38.6%	46.7%	38.2%	39.9%
To write answers to homework questions	31.3%	39.5%	35.5%	33.1%	35.8%	35.4%
To check spelling, punctuation and grammar	28.4%	36.6%	32.0%	35.7%	31.7%	32.6%
To get feedback on how my writing could be better	18.2%	23.3%	19.3%	32.2%	20.4%	21.0%
To turn my own ideas into a story	19.1%	18.9%	20.3%	10.8%	22.3%	18.5%
To help brainstorm or outline ideas	15.5%	18.2%	15.9%	25.7%	15.5%	17.4%
To help with story elements like characters, plot or dialogue	13.6%	16.0%	15.6%	10.7%	15.2%	15.0%
To create pictures or illustrations for my writing	14.3%	11.4%	13.5%	7.8%	12.6%	12.8%
For suggestions on different writing styles or genres	10.7%	12.3%	11.9%	9.4%	11.9%	11.4%

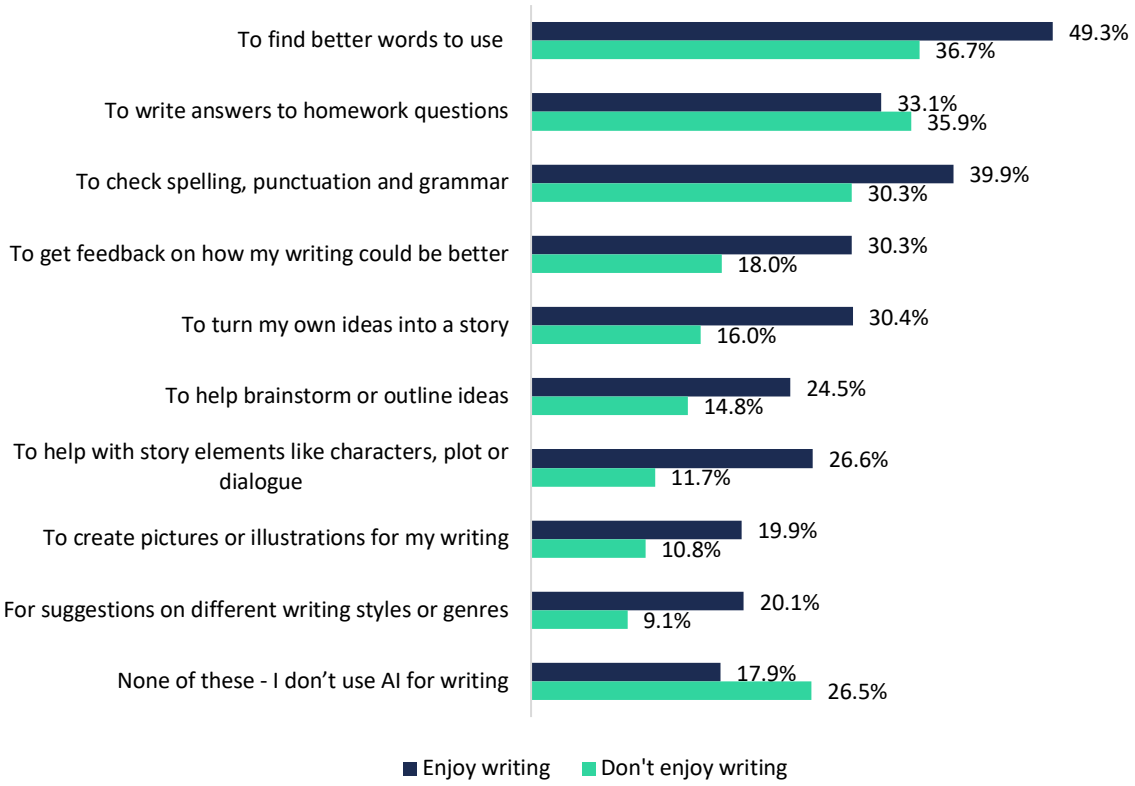
Links between writing engagement and the use of generative AI for writing

In 2025, we were interested to explore any differences in the use of generative AI to support aspects of the writing process in relation to young people's self-reported writing enjoyment and confidence. As shown in Figure 6, more young people who enjoyed writing reported using generative AI to support almost all aspects of their writing. This echoes findings from

2024, suggesting that more of those who already enjoyed writing were curious to use generative AI to support this practice. The biggest differences could be seen in relation to using AI to help with story elements like characters, plot and dialogue, turning existing ideas into a story and finding better words to use, all of which many more keen writers had used generative AI to support.

However, it is also worth noting that a considerable percentage of young people who did not enjoy writing told us they had used generative AI for most aspects of the writing process. The top three reasons for this group of young people were finding better words to use (36.7%), checking spelling, punctuation and grammar (30.3%), and getting feedback on how their writing could be better (18.0%).

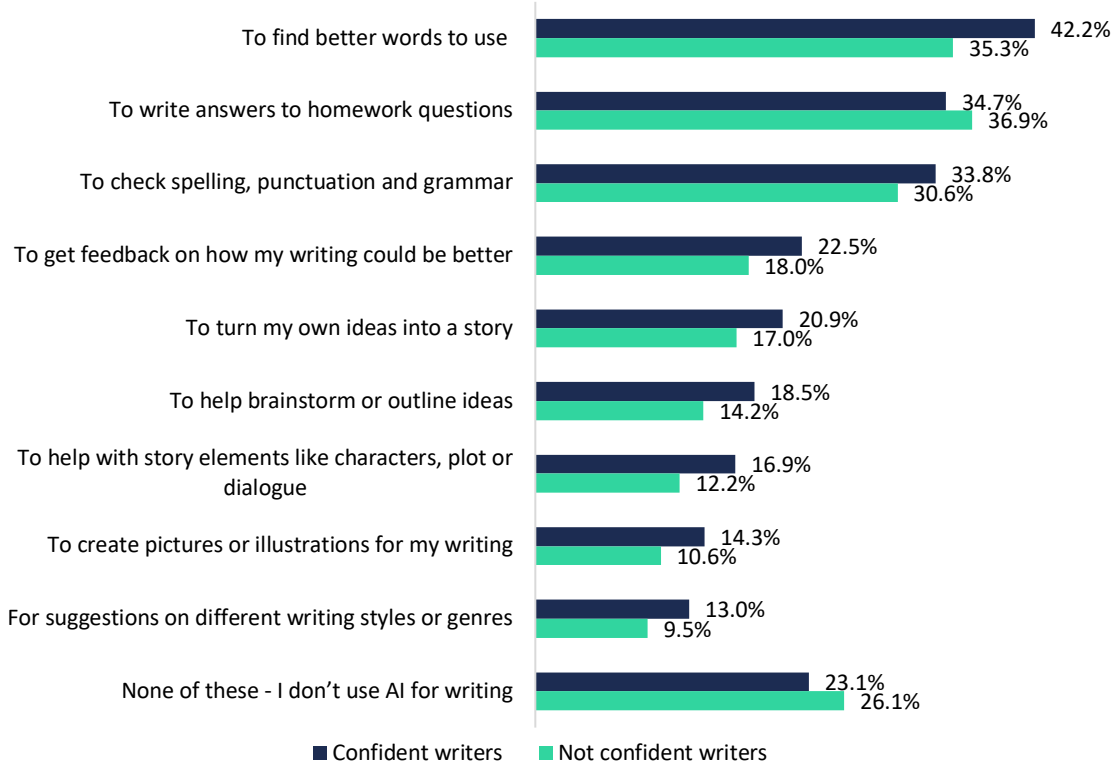
Figure 6: Using generative AI to support the writing process by writing enjoyment level



Differences in the use of generative AI to support aspects of the writing process were far less pronounced in relation to writing confidence. As shown in Figure 7, only slightly more of those who rated themselves as good writers said they used AI for most aspects of the writing process than those who were not confident writers. The biggest gaps between confident and unconfident writers' use of generative AI related to finding better words to use, helping with story elements such as characters, plot and dialogue, and getting feedback on how their writing could be better.

However, the most-cited reasons for using generative AI within the group of young people who were the least confident writers were the same as those of their more confident peers, including finding better words to use, writing answers to homework, checking spelling, punctuation and grammar, and getting feedback on how their writing could be better. Indeed, very similar percentages of confident and less-confident writers used AI for these purposes, as well as for turning ideas into stories and brainstorming, suggesting it may be seen to offer relatively similar support to young writers regardless of their existing confidence levels.

Figure 7: Using generative AI to support the writing process by writing confidence level



Using generative AI to support reading in 2025

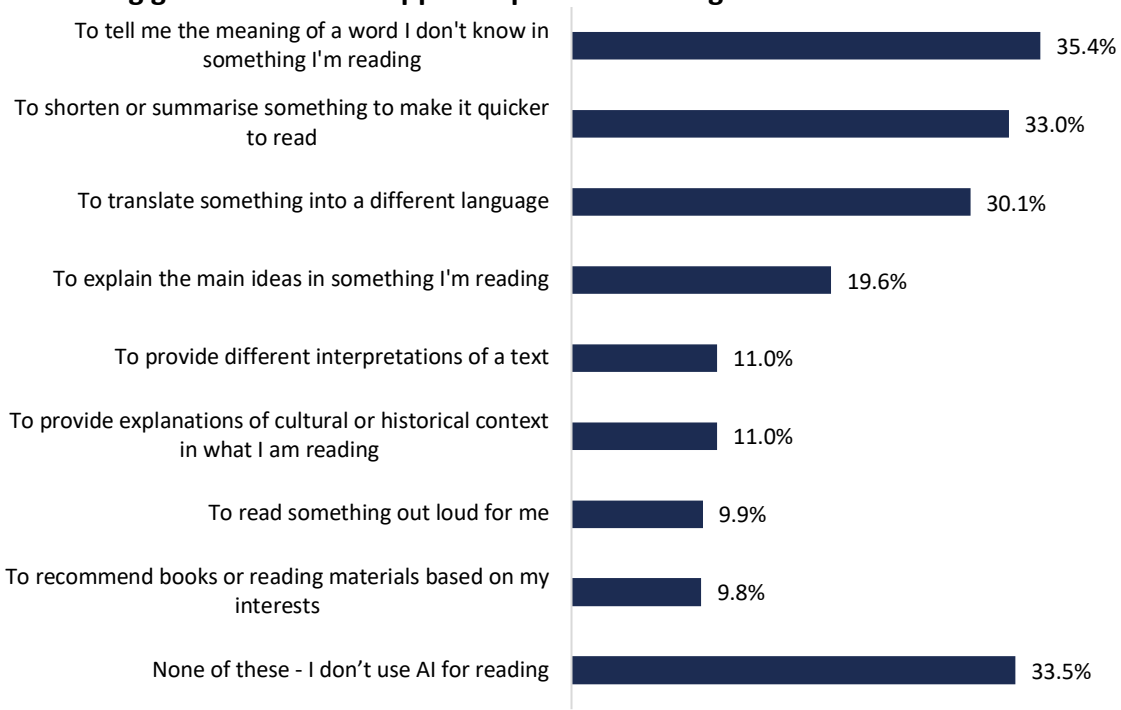
While generative AI can support many aspects of reading, such as summarising or simplifying texts, research exploring the use of these tools to support reading in young people is more limited.

In 2025, we asked young people who told us that they used generative AI at least once a month about using it to support their reading in more detail. Figure 8 shows that 1 in 3 did not use generative AI for any of the reading activities suggested at all. This aside, the most popular uses of generative AI to support reading were to learn the meaning of a word (essentially, a dictionary function), which more than 1 in 3 young people did. Perhaps a more

unique function of generative AI is its ability to shorten or summarise a text, and 1 in 3 young people said they had used it for this purpose. Again, while text translation is nothing new, generative AI platforms have improved the accessibility and quality of translation, and 3 in 10 young people said they had used it for this reason.

Linked with summarising and shortening text, generative AI platforms can explain the main ideas in a text, and 1 in 5 young people said they had used it in this way. This represents a slight decrease on a similar statement in our survey in 2024, when 1 in 4 (26.6%) agreed with the statement: "I use AI to tell me the main points of a website or article." Fewest young people had used generative AI for more interactive or involved help with aspects of reading, with 1 in 9 using it to explore different interpretations of a text or to provide cultural or historical context for what they were reading. Just 1 in 10 used generative AI to convert text to speech, and a similar percentage said they had used it to recommend reading material based on their interests.

Figure 8: Using generative AI to support aspects of reading



As shown in Table 4, there were some differences in the use of generative AI to support reading by gender, age and FSM status. More girls than boys used AI to find out the meaning of a word, while many more of those aged 16 to 18 used it to shorten or summarise texts to make them quicker to read, or to provide different interpretations of a text, likely reflecting increasing demands in the curriculum. Responses by FSM status were generally similar.

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Table 4: Young people's reasons for using generative AI to support their reading by gender, age and FSM status in 2025

	Gender		Age group		FSM uptake	
	Boy	Girl	13 to 16	16 to 18	FSM	Non-FSM
To tell me the meaning of a word I don't know in something I'm reading	29.6%	41.6%	36.1%	30.3%	35.4%	35.5%
To shorten or summarise something to make it quicker to read	30.3%	36.1%	31.5%	45.5%	30.7%	33.2%
To translate something into a different language	27.4%	32.8%	31.5%	18.7%	30.6%	30.0%
To explain the main ideas in something I'm reading	18.7%	20.5%	18.6%	27.5%	19.4%	19.6%
To provide different interpretations of a text	10.3%	11.8%	10.1%	19.1%	10.8%	11.2%
To provide explanations of cultural or historical context in what I am reading	10.5%	11.4%	10.4%	15.8%	10.9%	11.0%
To read something out loud for me	9.8%	9.9%	10.3%	6.4%	11.1%	9.5%
To recommend books or reading materials based on my interests	8.2%	11.3%	9.7%	10.6%	10.8%	9.7%

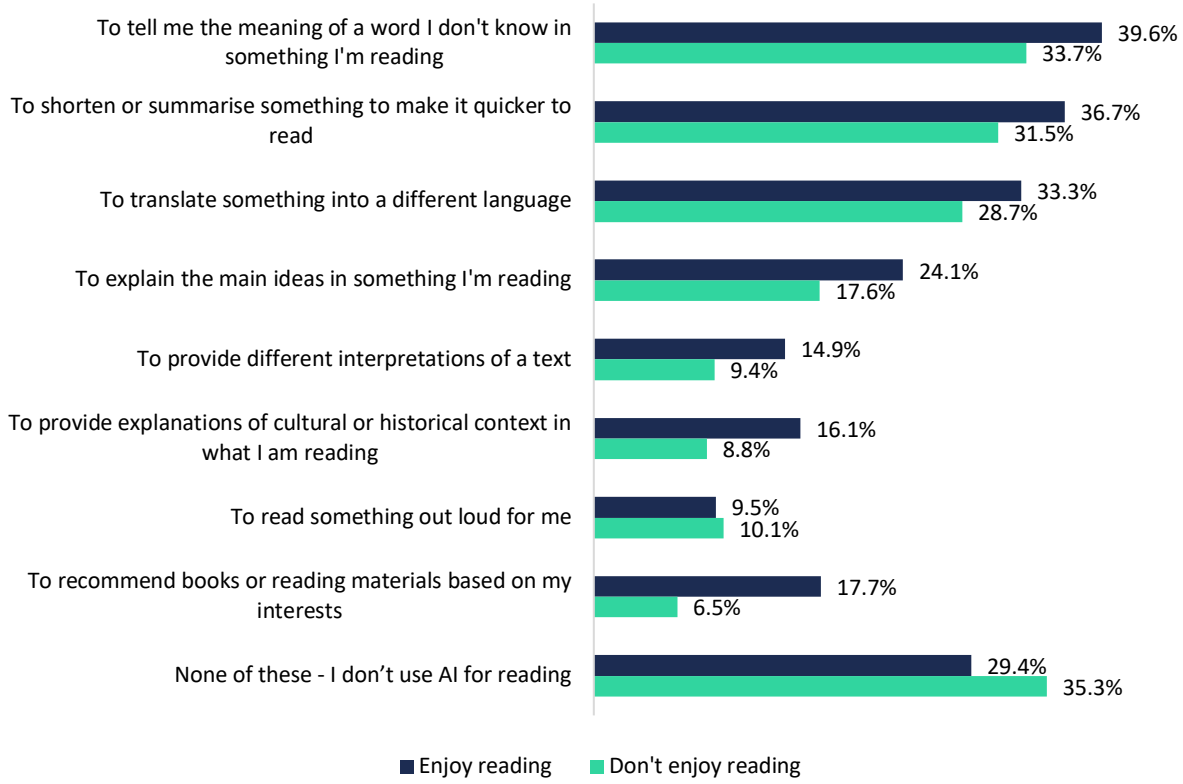
Links between reading engagement and use of generative AI for reading

We were also interested to explore any differences in the use of generative AI to support reading based on young people's reading enjoyment and confidence. Although more young people who enjoyed reading reported using generative AI to support their reading, the difference between those who did and did not enjoy reading was less pronounced than the difference observed in AI use based on writing enjoyment. The biggest differences could be seen in relation to using AI to recommend books or reading materials based on interests, to provide cultural or historical context for a text, and to explain the main ideas in something being read, all of which more young people who enjoyed reading had used generative AI to support.

At the same time, many young people who did not enjoy reading also reported using generative AI to support their reading. The top reasons for this group matched those of young people who did enjoy reading, and the only reason chosen more often by the least keen readers was to have something read aloud. Otherwise, the narrowest gaps between those with the highest and lowest levels of reading enjoyment related to translating

something into a different language and shortening or summarising something to make it quicker to read.

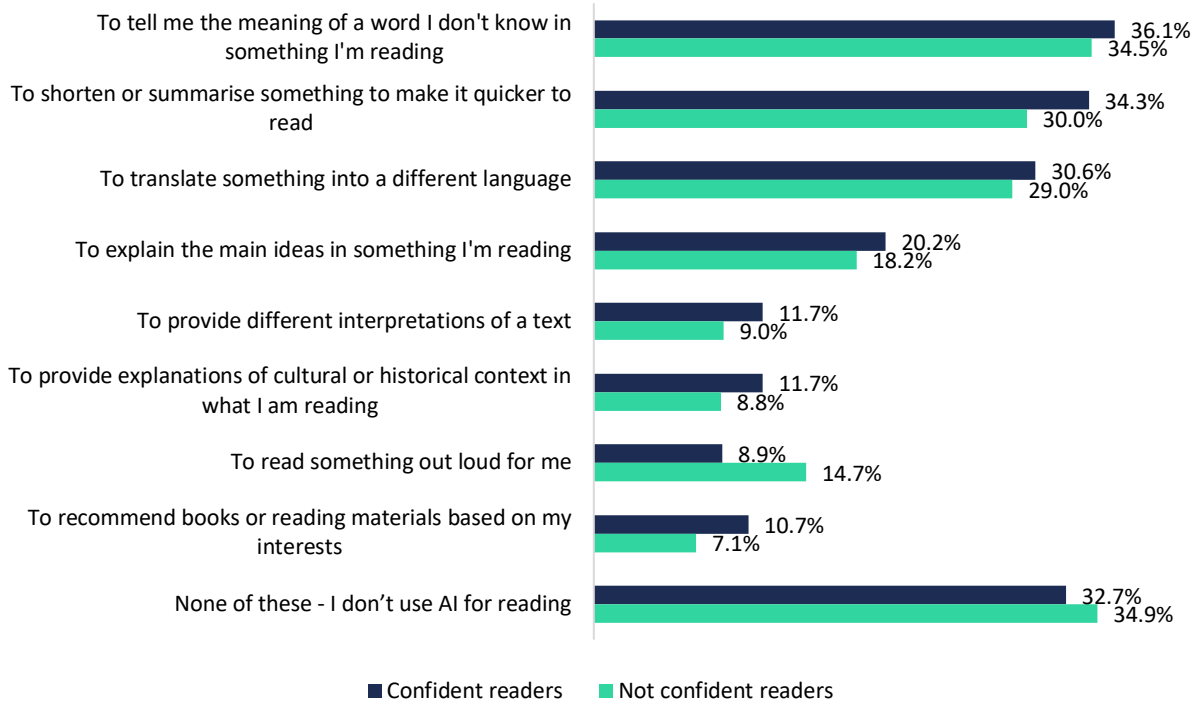
Figure 9: Using generative AI to support reading by reading enjoyment level



As with writing, differences in the use of generative AI to support reading were far smaller in relation to young people's perception of their own reading ability. As shown in Figure 10, a very similar percentage of young people, regardless of their reading confidence, told us they used AI for most reading-related purposes. The biggest gaps between confident and unconfident readers' use of generative AI related to summarising text, recommending books based on their interests, and providing context for reading material.

At the same time, very similar percentages of confident and unconfident readers used AI to learn the meaning of words, translate texts, and explain ideas in something they were reading. In addition, a higher percentage of less confident readers said they had used generative AI to read something aloud, suggesting that it can potentially offer helpful support in accessing text for this group of young people.

Figure 10: Using generative AI to support reading by reading confidence level

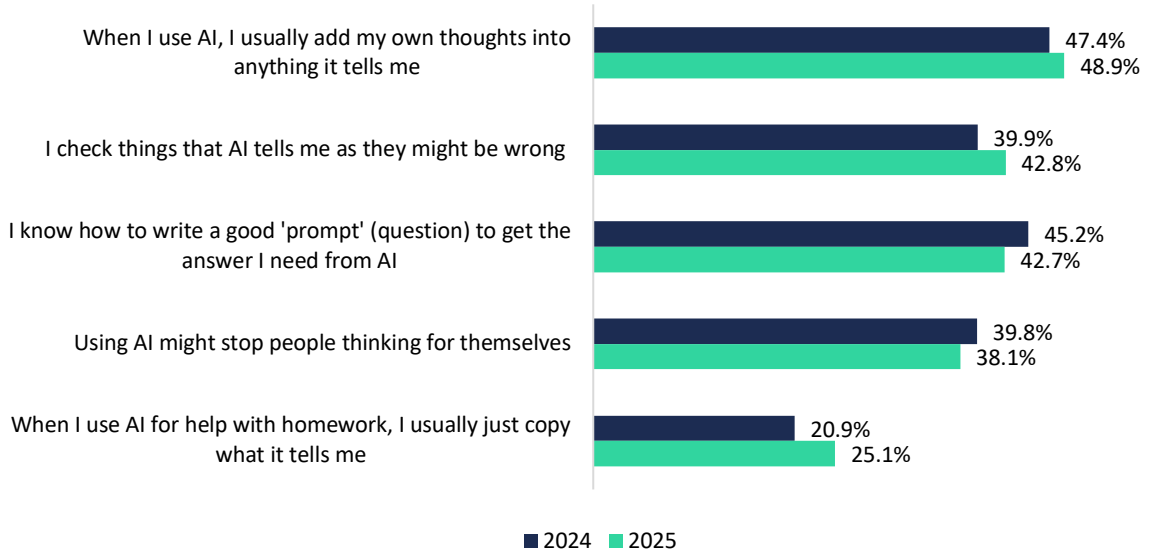


13- to 18-year-olds' attitudes and behaviours around using generative AI in 2025

In both 2024 and 2025, we asked young people who had heard of generative AI about their attitudes to using it more broadly by asking them to what extent they agreed with a series of statements.

As can be seen in Figure 11, there have been minimal changes in levels of agreement with most statements over the last year. Around 1 in 2 young people told us that they usually added their own thoughts into anything AI told them, and slightly more than 2 in 5 checked AI outputs in case they were wrong. However, slightly fewer felt able to write an effective prompt to get the response they wanted from AI and, concerningly, while 1 in 5 admitted to just copying AI outputs when using it for homework in 2024, this increased to 1 in 4 in 2025.

Figure 11: Young people aged 13 to 18's attitudes and behaviours around using generative AI in 2024 and 2025



The design of the survey does not allow for any deeper exploration of why young people might choose to copy AI outputs, but reasons may include lack of knowledge or interest in the homework topic, lack of awareness about the potential inaccuracy of AI outputs, or a sense that everything online can be trusted. Evidence from wider research suggests that around 1 in 2 young people agree that a potential negative impact of AI is that it could "take away the need to think for myself" (51% of those aged 14 to 16 and 53% of those aged 16 to 19 agreed with this), with even more believing that "information from AI could be false or misleading" (57% of those aged 14 to 16 and 62% of those aged 16 to 19)[15], suggesting that young people have a relatively high awareness of hallucinations or confabulations. At the same time, Ofcom research found that while 1 in 3 (36%) AI users aged 13 to 17 would trust an AI-generated news article less than one written by a human, a similar percentage (35%) said they would trust a human or AI-generated news article to the same extent, and almost 1 in 5 (17%) would trust an AI-written story more than one written by a human[16]. This suggests that a considerable number of young people believe AI-generated content is innately trustworthy.

More broadly, other research has found plagiarism to be a significant concern for teachers but, interestingly, less so among parents (at least compared with worries about exposure to unsuitable content or lack of critical thinking), which is important because parents are more likely to be present for homework[17]. Taken together, these findings suggest that more must

[15] Department for Education (2025). *Parent, pupil and learner voice: March 2025*
[16] Ofcom (2025). *Children's Media Literacy Report 2025*
[17] Hashem, Y., Esnaashari, S., Onslow, K., Chakraborty, S., Poletaev, A. & Francis, J. (2025). *Understanding the impacts of generative AI use on children*. Alan Turing Institute.

be done to support young people in using generative AI tools in ways that support engagement with, rather than avoidance of, learning.

As shown in Table 5, there were some differences in attitudes, particularly by age, with responses appearing to demonstrate a more considered or reflective approach to generative AI in older teens. For example, compared with young people aged 13 to 16, many more of those aged 16 to 18 said they added their own thoughts into AI outputs and checked what it told them as it could be wrong. They were also more worried about the impact of AI on independent thought, and far less likely to say they usually just copied AI outputs when using it for homework. Other gaps related mostly to FSM status, with more of those who did not receive FSMs confident about writing prompts, and fewer saying they copied outputs when using AI for homework.

Table 5: Young people's attitudes to using generative AI by gender, age and FSM status in 2025

	Gender		Age group		FSM uptake	
	Boy	Girl	13 to 16	16 to 18	FSM	Non-FSM
When I use AI, I usually add my own thoughts into anything it tells me	48.4%	49.5%	46.5%	69.3%	46.3%	50.0%
I check things that AI tells me as they might be wrong	42.8%	42.6%	40.9%	58.5%	41.5%	43.3%
I know how to write a good 'prompt' (question) to get the answer I need from AI	45.8%	39.9%	40.9%	57.4%	38.9%	44.0%
Using AI might stop people thinking for themselves	35.9%	40.1%	36.7%	49.8%	36.8%	38.9%
When I use AI for help with homework, I usually just copy what it tells me	23.5%	26.6%	26.8%	10.0%	30.0%	24.0%

Our earlier research found that literacy engagement is associated with critical digital literacy, including checking if news stories online are true[18]. Looking at differences in attitudes for young people who did and did not enjoy reading and writing, in the current survey, more young people who enjoyed both reading and writing reported adding their own thoughts to AI outputs, checking outputs and feeling able to write good prompts to get the information

[18] Picton et al., (2022) *Insights into young people's literacy, critical digital literacy, online communication and wellbeing*, National Literacy Trust

they needed from AI (see Table 5).

More young people who enjoyed reading or writing told us that they added their own thoughts to AI outputs compared with those who did not (reading: 59.9% vs 44.1%; writing: 58.3% vs 46.1%). Conversely, more of those who didn't enjoy these activities said that they simply copied AI responses, especially in relation to reading enjoyment (reading: 28.6% vs 17.0%; writing: 25.9% vs 22.0%).

Table 5: Young people's attitudes to using generative AI by reading and writing enjoyment in 2025

	Reading enjoyment		Writing enjoyment	
	Enjoy reading	Don't enjoy reading	Enjoy writing	Don't enjoy writing
When I use AI, I usually add my own thoughts into anything it tells me	59.9%	44.1%	58.3%	46.1%
I check things that AI tells me as they might be wrong	52.8%	38.3%	52.4%	39.9%
I know how to write a good 'prompt' (question) to get the answer I need from AI	50.4%	39.3%	49.0%	40.9%
When I use AI for help with homework, I usually just copy what it tells me	17.0%	28.6%	22.0%	25.9%

On a related note, amid growing concerns around the perception of the value of developing writing and reading skills in the age of AI[19], we included three new statements relating to generative AI use in our 2025 survey to explore young people's attitudes in this area (see Figure 12). Somewhat encouragingly, there was a high percentage of agreement that "even when we have AI, it is important to learn how to write", with 2 in 3 (65.5%) young people aged 13 to 18 agreeing with this, although a worrying 1 in 12 (8.2%) disagreed (1 in 4 had no view either way or didn't know).

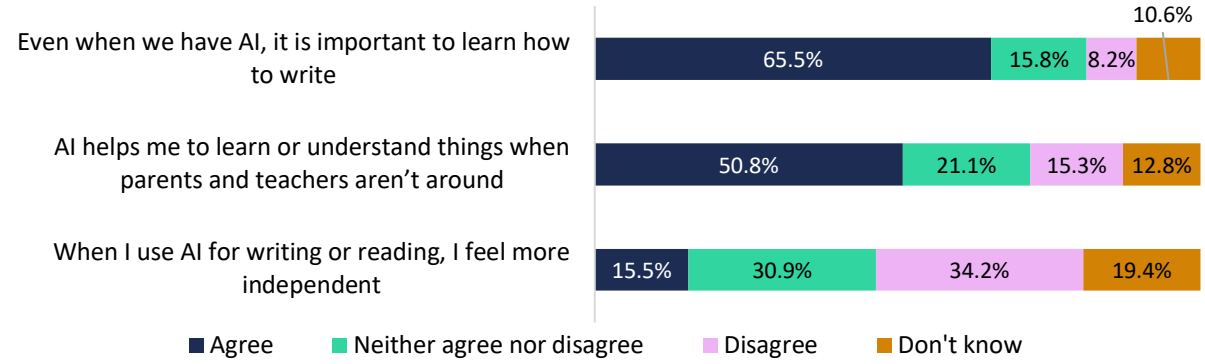
We were also interested in exploring whether young people felt that generative AI helped them to learn or understand things when parents and teachers weren't around, as they would have varying levels of access to supportive adults to support their learning. Other research asking young people about perceived advantages of using AI found that many agreed that AI made information easier to access (48% of those aged 14 to 16 and 59% of those aged 16 to 19) and helped them understand things better (38% of 14 to 16s and 51%

[19] See e.g. our teacher survey, in which 2 in 3 agreed that generative AI might decrease the perceived value of writing skills: Picton, I. & Clark, C., (2025) *Teachers' use of generative AI to support literacy in 2025*, National Literacy Trust

of 16 to 19s)[20]. In our own survey, 1 in 2 young people agreed that AI helped them to learn or understand things, suggesting these tools are perceived to be supporting independent learning for a considerable number of young people.

At the same time, however, just 1 in 6 young people agreed that they felt more independent when using generative AI for writing or reading. Indeed, this was the most disagreed-with statement, with 1 in 3 disagreeing that they felt this way. This suggests that some young people may, in fact, feel more of a sense of dependence on these tools when using them to support writing and reading (rather than, for example, information-seeking) in particular, something we hope to explore in future research.

Figure 12: Young people aged 13 to 18's attitudes to using generative AI in 2025



As shown in Table 6, there were quite large differences in agreement about the importance of writing by gender, age group and FSM status. The greatest difference related to age, with a 17.3-percentage-point difference between younger and older teens' agreement with this statement. Similarly, many more girls than boys agreed that it was important to learn how to write, as did slightly more young people who did not receive FSMs. This suggests more must be done to emphasise the value of writing, especially to the younger age group and boys. Other notable gaps related to AI helping one to learn in the absence of parents or teachers, which many more of those aged 16 to 18 agreed with compared with other groups. This may reflect the higher level of learning expected at Key Stage 5 and the potential benefits of AI for those at this stage of their studies.

[20] Department for Education (2025) *Parent, pupil and learner voice: March 2025*

Table 6: Young people's attitudes to using generative AI by gender, age and FSM status in 2025

	Gender		Age group		FSM uptake	
	Boy	Girl	13 to 16	16 to 18	FSM	Non-FSM
Even when we have AI, it is important to learn how to write	60.8%	70.1%	63.6%	80.9%	61.1%	67.1%
AI helps me to learn or understand things when parents and teachers aren't around	48.9%	53.1%	49.2%	64.7%	46.4%	52.2%
When I use AI for writing or reading, I feel more independent	16.0%	14.9%	15.4%	16.1%	17.0%	15.1%

Summary and discussion

We have now asked young people about their generative AI use and attitudes for three consecutive years, analysing the views and perspectives of tens of thousands of young people aged 13 to 18 and helping to build a picture of levels of engagement in the next generation. The speed of development in generative AI over this time has fuelled ongoing debate into what it means to be literate in a digital world, often focusing more on risks than benefits. Concerns range from the pragmatic to the existential, with some academics simply stating that, "literacy increasingly means and includes interacting with and critically evaluating AI"[21], while others ask us to consider whether reading and writing skills might eventually become obsolete[22].

In 2025, alongside tracking how the use of generative AI differed over time and by gender, age and socio-economic background, our survey aimed to expand our knowledge of how young people used AI to support their writing and reading practices. Findings showed some consolidation of AI use, with fewer young people using it, but those who did (more boys, older teens and young people who did not receive free school meals) were using it more often. This may suggest that some young people have higher-quality experiences of using these tools than others, something we intend to explore in the next phase of this research.

[21] McKnight, L. (2021). *To succeed in an AI world, students must learn the human traits of writing*.
[22] Hamilton et al. (2023). *The Future of AI in Education: 13 Things We Can Do to Minimize the Damage*; Villasenor, J. (2025). AI has rendered traditional writing skills obsolete. Education needs to adapt. *Brookings;* Rothman, J. (2025, June 17). What's Happening to Reading? *The New Yorker*.

The research also found that more young people who enjoyed reading and writing used generative AI to support more interactive or complex practices (such as providing feedback, shaping ideas into stories, or generating characters, plots and dialogue rather than, for example, checking spelling). This suggests that enjoyment motivated deeper engagement with AI tools. However, while these uses can be enriching, there may be a risk that over-reliance on AI for such purposes may lead to disengagement from the creative and exploratory aspects of writing – including overcoming challenges – that are intrinsic to writing-for-pleasure practices.

At the same time, while young people who did not enjoy writing were most likely to say they had used AI to find better words to use or check spelling, punctuation and grammar, 1 in 5 had used these tools to ask for feedback on how their writing could be better. This use of generative AI to enhance the technical aspects of writing points to its potential to offer personalised and accessible support, especially for young people who struggle with – or do not enjoy – writing. By lowering technical barriers, AI could help this group build confidence and competence in foundational writing skills.

Indeed, while half of the young people we surveyed agreed that AI helped their learning in the absence of teachers or parents, far fewer told us that they felt more independent when using AI for writing or reading, a finding echoed in one study suggesting a 'cognitive debt' when using AI tools at an early stage of the essay-writing process[23]. This suggests a tendency toward dependence rather than empowerment in literacy development and emphasises the importance of considering not only access to, but meaningful and impactful engagement with, AI tools, including when not to engage with them. In fact, the majority (two thirds) of young people recognised the importance of learning to write for their personal and academic development despite the availability of AI tools, offering a positive counter to concerns voiced in our companion teacher survey[24].

Nevertheless, while many young people report checking AI outputs for accuracy and adding their own thoughts, findings also showed concerning trends in young people's attitudes to using generative AI, with an increasing number copying AI outputs and lower rates of critical engagement in younger age groups and those receiving FSMs. Learning to work effectively and reflectively with AI outputs is part of developing good AI-literacy skills[25]. As AI tools become more pervasive and their capabilities expand and improve, it is essential that young people are supported to learn how to use them to support rather than supplant self-

[23] Kosmyna, N., Hauptmann, E., Yuan, Y. T., Situ, J., Liao, X-H., Beresnitzky, A. V., Braunstein, I. & Maes, P. (2025). *Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task* (Version 1)
[24] Picton et al. (2025) Teachers' Use of Generative AI to Support Literacy in 2025, National Literacy Trust
[25] See, e.g., Kim, S. (2024). *Reconceptualizing literacy in the age of artificial intelligence.*

expression and, to this end, we support wider calls for AI literacy to be included in the curriculum[26].

In addition, academics and educational policymakers should continue to build on existing support and resources offered to teachers[27] by defining ethical and pedagogical boundaries for AI use in schools, and, recognising that many young people are using generative AI with little support or guidance, help teachers to develop expectations for student engagement, including around critical evaluation, citation and co-creation. As the evidence base improves, it is also important to consider how generative AI might be meaningfully integrated into writing instruction, especially for disengaged or struggling young writers. The challenge will be to harness AI's potential to support writing while preserving the core values of originality, creativity and persistence that make writing a transformative tool for learning and personal growth. As part of this, writing instruction should prioritise helping children and young people understand the value of not just technically polished work, but writing that develops their critical thinking, creativity and unique personal voice.

Informed by a decade of research exploring interactions between literacy and technology, this research contributes to our work contemplating the future of literacy education, with an aim of ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to develop the literacy skills they need to thrive in work and in life. We will continue to foreground the voices and experiences of young people in our research, listening to whether the support AI can offer might improve some young people's experience of writing and increase their sense of enjoyment. In the next stage of this research, themes and findings will be discussed directly with young people, teachers and librarians, allowing us to support more critical and creative interactions with AI.

[26] https://www.turing.ac.uk/news/experts-call-greater-focus-childrens-ai-use-research-shows-nearly-1-4-children-use-ai-learning

[27] See, e.g., Department for Education (2025) *Using AI in Education Settings: Support materials*, Oak Academy's AILA, Teaching with ChatGPT, Experience AI

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Appendix 1

The National Literacy Trust's Annual Literacy Survey, run annually since 2010, includes questions about reading, writing, speaking and listening, as well as about children and young people's access to literacy resources at home and in school. Three surveys were available for children and young people in 2025: one for children aged 5 to 8, one for children and young people aged 8 to 16, and one for young people aged 16 and older. We also have a teacher survey. Taking place from January to March every year, schools are recruited from autumn onwards through our networks, newsletters and social media followers. Participating schools receive their own school-specific report, which means that they can compare their responses with national data once we publish the national reports.

Following the launch of ChatGPT-3 in November 2022, questions about awareness and use of generative AI were included in the 2023 survey, with further questions on attitudes and behaviours around AI added in 2024 and 2025. In 2025, 105,583 children and young people aged 8 to 18 from schools across the UK participated in our Annual Literacy Survey. Of these, 63,810 were aged 13 to 18, and 50,848 answered questions about use of generative AI. Demographic information for those who answered questions about AI is as follows: 24,070 (47.3%) were boys; 24,949 (49.1%) were girls; 988 (1.9%) would rather not say; 768 (1.5%) described themselves another way; and 73 (0.1%) described themselves as non-binary. 45,928 (90.3%) were aged 13 to 16 and 4,920 (9.7%) were aged 16 to 18. 8,002 (15.7%) told us they received FSMs; 39,300 (77.3%) told us they didn't receive FSMs; 2,842 (5.6%) didn't know; and 704 (1.4%) didn't want to say. 44,275 (87.1%) attended schools in England; 990 (1.9%) attended schools in Wales; 2,910 (5.7%) attended schools in Scotland; and 2,673 (5.3%) attended schools in Northern Ireland.

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About the National Literacy Trust

Our charity is dedicated to improving the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills of those who need it most, giving them the best possible chance of success in school, work and life. We run Literacy Hubs and campaigns in communities where low levels of literacy and social mobility are seriously impacting people's lives. We support schools and early years settings to deliver outstanding literacy provision, and we campaign to make literacy a priority for politicians, businesses and parents. Our research and analysis make us the leading authority on literacy and drive our interventions.

Literacy is a vital element of action against poverty and our work changes life stories.

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