Before AI, Ask Why

A Guide To Learning Agency in The Age of AI

ALIGNMENT

This is a framework to help teachers and students use AI intentionally and reflectively, ensuring that learning objectives and skill development remain the primary focus.
Older students can use this guide for self-direction, while teachers can facilitate the conversation for younger learners.

01 Analyze Assignment (The 'Why')

Before using any tool, clarify the learning objectives.

- **Identify the Core Skill:** What is the key skill this assignment is designed to develop?
- **Pinpoint My Growth Area:** What specific part of the assignment will require the most practice and new learning from me?
- **Define Success:** What must I do to demonstrate genuine understanding, beyond simply completing the task?

02 Choose Your AI Path (The 'How')

Choose how to engage with AI based on assignment's learning objective.

Path A: AI Free

I will rely entirely on my own thinking and skills.

Best for:

- Assessments of independent knowledge;
- Building a new skill from scratch;
- Creative assignments where personal unique voice is essential.

Goal:

- **Deep, focused** work and complete ownership of the learning process.

Path B: AI Assisted

I will use AI to assist workflow and understanding, not to generate content.

Best for:

- Overcome initial blocks and organize thoughts;
- Clarify complex topics to build foundational knowledge.

Goal: *Use AI as a Scaffold*:

- Brainstorm and outline ideas;
- Navigate research;
- Act as a tutor to explain concepts.

Path C: AI Enhanced

I will collaborate with AI to challenge, deepen, and refine my original ideas.

Best for:

- Push the thinking to a higher, more critical level;
- Analyze the completed work from new perspectives.

Goal: *Use AI as a thinking partner*:

- Pressure-test the arguments;
- Offer new perspectives;
- Provide targeted feedback on the draft.

Caution Zone: Teacher Approval Required

Get explicit permission for AI uses that interfere with skill development, including editing grammar, rephrasing my work, or formatting citations.

03 Final Metacognitive Check

Set clear rules to maintain academic ownership and integrity.

- **Connection to Learning:** How does my chosen path help me practice the key skill for this assignment?
- **Ownership:** How will I ensure that the final work is truly mine and that I can defend every part of it?
- **Risk Management:** What is the biggest risk of my approach (e.g., losing a skill-building opportunity, accidental plagiarism), and what is my one simple rule to prevent it?

Revisiting Your 'Why'

A Reflection on The Learning Path

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Take 5 minutes to reflect on the process of this assignment and how AI plays a role in the process of learning.

01 Review AI Path

The Path I **PLANNED** to take:

1. **Path A: AI-Free**
2. **Path B: AI-Assisted**
3. **Path C: AI-Enhanced**

The Path I **ACTUALLY** to take:

1. **Path A: AI-Free**
2. **Path B: AI-Assisted**
3. **Path C: AI-Enhanced**

If the AI Path is B or C, briefly describe how:

02 Analyze The Impact

1. If your path changed, what was the turning point?

Think about the moment you decided to switch or use a tool differently. What was happening in your learning process?

2. How did the path you took impact your learning of the main skill?

☐ It supported my learning because...

☐ It hindered my learning because...

3. Did you follow the rule you set for yourself in the before-assignment check? Why or why not?

03 Plan for the Future

Guiding Questions:

- What is one thing you will keep doing in your process because it worked well?
- What is one thing you will change for your next assignment to learn even more effectively?