Using Gen AI Chatbots For Legal Help

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LOOKINGOUT
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If you have an important legal issue, it is always best to seek professional help from a lawyer. Sometimes your only option, however, may be to proceed without an attorney to represent you. If that is the case, you should understand the law, the facts of your case, and the rules of court. Generative artificial intelligence or gen AI-based chatbots are not a replacement for an attorney, but they can be helpful if you understand how to use them; are aware of their limitations; and take care to protect your personal information and any confidential information about you and your case.

How do gen AI chatbots work?

Gen AI chatbots use data from the internet to communicate. By accessing that content, the chatbot interface can relay your question and produce an answer. "Answers" to questions are provided by predicting the order of words, similar to the way a typical smartphone text or email application might.

How is a gen AI chatbot different from Google or other internet-based search engines?

Most gen AI chatbots use public content available on the internet, similar to a general internet search. However, there are some key differences:

- An internet search will return a list of relevant websites. A gen AI chatbot will try to provide you with an "answer" to your question or query. It is important to remember that the chatbot does not understand your problem, nor does it "think" to come up with the answer the way an attorney might. Rather, it scans available source material (usually, the internet) to assemble what it determines to be the most appropriate response.
- New content is frequently added to the internet. However, a gen AI database usually has a "cut-off" date that indicates the last time

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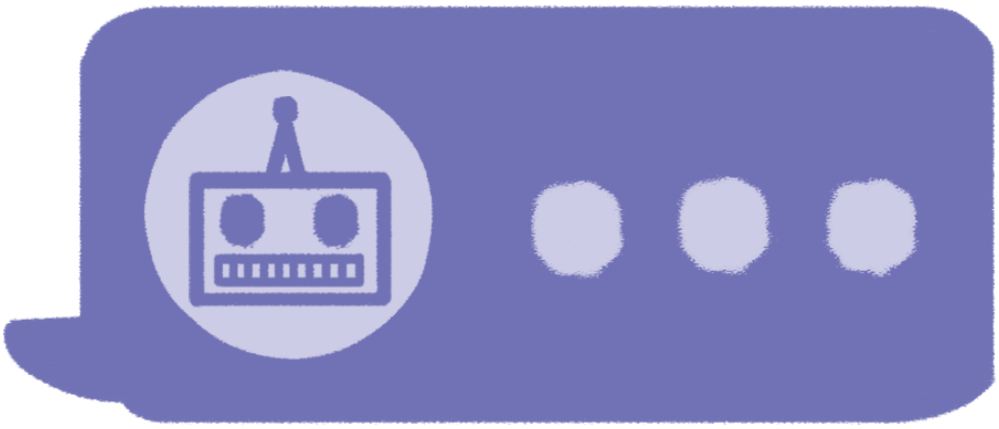
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This newsletter is for general information only. If you have a legal problem, you should see a lawyer.

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new content was added. Therefore, gen AI may not always use the most current information available.

How is Google's AI Overview different from using Google or a gen AI chatbot?

Google AI Overview uses the words you entered in the search bar to search Google and then uses AI to summarize the results. Because the AI summary is based on a "guesstimate" of your question, it is better to either ask your question using a gen AI chatbot or to perform a Google search. While Google AI Overview can produce quick results, it may contain inaccurate information.

How do I ask a gen AI chatbot a question?

To get an answer from a gen AI chatbot, you need to enter a "prompt," that is a set of instructions or commands for what information you want. For example, "I was kicked out of my apartment. Where can I find resources to help me?" is a basic prompt that might be used if you were recently evicted and need help. You can enter a prompt using your natural language because the gen AI chatbot can translate your words into legal concepts, and even other languages.

What should I include in my prompt (question)?

Your question should not include personal information or specific details about your case, but you should give some context. For example, you might include the type of case you are involved in and important dates or upcoming events. Be sure to state that you want an answer based on New Jersey law. You may indicate to the gen AI chatbot that you are not a lawyer but need to learn about the law for a particular reason. You can also ask the gen AI chatbot to take on a role—for example, you can ask the gen AI chatbot to "act as an experienced New Jersey attorney."

After you receive an answer from the gen AI chatbot, you can ask it additional clarifying questions. Most AI chatbots can only remember your question for approximately five follow up questions, so you might have to reenter your prompt.

Is it safe to enter personal information in a gen AI Chatbot session?

No! Your privacy is NOT protected when you use a public gen AI chatbot and any information you enter in a prompt is collected and stored in a database. You should never put sensitive details about your case or personal information about you or anyone else, such as Social Security number, address, names of children, date of birth, or specific addresses. You can use non-identifying information or fake names to conceal your identity.

In addition to personal information, do not put anything in a gen AI prompt that you don't want other people to know. Remember that any information you put in a public gen AI chat becomes a part of that database. You may also have to provide your gen AI chat sessions to the opposing party in a lawsuit.

What else should I know about the limits of AI?

Gen AI chatbots may hallucinate. In this context, hallucinate means that it may fabricate (make up) things such as cases, statutes, and conclusions. It is a good idea to ask the gen AI chatbot to list the sources it used to answer your question. Always double check the sources provided. If you submit filings to the court that contains hallucinations or other errors, you could potentially be subject to

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sanctions, including reprimands, fines, or dismissed pleadings.

Gen AI chatbots are also designed to be "nice," to agree with you, and to be confident when responding. Don't expect a gen AI chatbot to say "I don't know" or "I'm not sure" in response to your question or query if it does not have enough relevant information to answer the question. You can ask it the same question again to see if you get the same answer. You can also include a statement that if the AI is not sure or doesn't know the answer to your question, it should say "I don't know" or "I can't answer your question."

Also, gen AI chatbots may not be using current data. Laws can change, so it is a good idea to ask the AI "what is your cut-off date?" of the sources of information it uses to answer your question or query. You should always try to consult the most up to date resources.

What are some good ways to use gen AI chatbots?

Legal terms can be complicated. Gen AI chatbots can help you translate legal vocabulary (including Latin terms) into simpler language. This is very helpful when you need an explanation of legal terminology or a legal procedure. You can also ask gen AI chatbots to translate a redacted (personal information removed or hidden) legal document, like a lease, contract, or loan agreement.

Gen AI chatbots can also be helpful writing coaches. You can upload or copy and paste a document (without private and sensitive information) and then ask the gen AI chatbot to proofread or suggest ways to improve what you have written.

Legal documents often have special formats that must be used. The best place to find formats for legal documents is a court website. For example, in New Jersey, ***www.njcourts.gov***. But you can also use gen AI chatbots to find legal formats or to create a checklist of requirements for a document.

Gen AI chatbots can also help you prepare for court. You can tell a chatbot what you plan to say to the court; then you can ask for suggestions to improve what you are going to say. You can ask it what arguments an opposing party might make so you will be better prepared to respond. But, again, be sure not to include identifying information, such as your name or address.

Is there anything else I should keep in mind?

Gen AI chatbots can give you legal information, but they cannot give you legal advice. Every jurisdiction has its own laws. The federal government also has its own laws. Be sure to include the state/county/town and the specific court where your case is being heard in your prompt so it can help you find the most accurate information.

Can I use gen AI chatbots for legal research?

If you have a legal problem, you should try to consult a legal professional or other trusted source of legal information, such as LSNJLAW[SM].

If you have a civil legal problem in New Jersey, you can also apply for help from the LSNJLAW[SM] Hotline online at ***www.lsnjlawhotline.org*** or by calling 1-888-LSNJ-LAW (1-888-576-5529).

If you use a gen AI chatbot for legal research, try asking the chatbot to break your legal issue into smaller chunks. Then you can ask it to help you develop a research plan. Gen AI chatbots are also helpful for an overview of a legal area or a place to start research.

Remember to:

- Leave out personal information.
- Say that you want it to use the law of the place where you live or where the case is happening.
- Ask it to say "I don't know" or "I can't answer the question" if it is not sure of the answer.
- Ask it to list all the sources it is using to come up with an answer. You must double-check the answer by looking at the sources it gives or trying a Google search to see if the results are the same.

Where can I find a gen AI chatbot?

You can find free versions of gen AI chatbots on the internet. Some popular chatbots include Chat GPT, Claude, and Google Gemini. ▲