LibreChat Quickstart Guide
Created by Hastings Initiative Members
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What is LibreChat?

LibreChat is an open-source, self-hosted AI chat platform that provides the college community with secure access to multiple large language models (LLMs) while maintaining full institutional control over data privacy and security. Unlike commercial AI tools, LibreChat operates within the College's private cloud infrastructure, ensuring that user interactions and data remain completely within our institutional boundaries and are never shared with external entities.

Key Benefits:

- Access to multiple LLMs with the same capabilities as commercial providers
- Enhanced privacy and security within our institutional infrastructure
- Safe integration of sensitive data in compliance with college data classification policies
- Full institutional control over all user data and interactions

Access: Available to all faculty and staff; student access granted upon completion of the [Ethical Considerations — Using Generative AI Responsibly at Bowdoin and Beyond](#) course in Canvas.

Sensitive Data Use: Permitted due to the platform's secure, private environment.

How to Use LibreChat

How to Access: For detailed login instructions and setup guidance, see IT's [Getting Started with LibreChat](#) guide.

Tips for Getting Started

Experiment with different models (using the pull-down menu at the top left to select) and see what works for you. If you don't know where to start, try GPT-5 or either of the Claude models. Try o3-deep-research (OpenAI's Deep Research model) for more complex prompts. Deep Research takes longer and produces a cited report after analyzing many sources.

- **Be specific in your prompting**
  - Provide context about your audience, the purpose, etc.
  - Be specific about the format you want your results to take (bulleted list, paragraphs, etc.)

- **Iterate your prompts**—use your critical thinking to ask models to go deeper, or try another approach
- **Try different models** as each has different strengths
  - Use multiple tools for research as different tools have access to different databases
- **Break complex tasks into smaller steps**
- **Use AI to assess outputs**—try having one AI evaluate another AI's work, or ask an AI to critique its own response
- **Fact check**: AI can make things up (hallucinate)
  - Always verify sources and citations as these tools can make mistakes or completely fabricate academic sources in particular