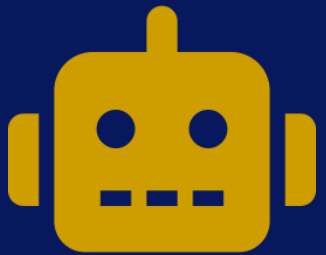
Gen AI for Role Plays & Simulations

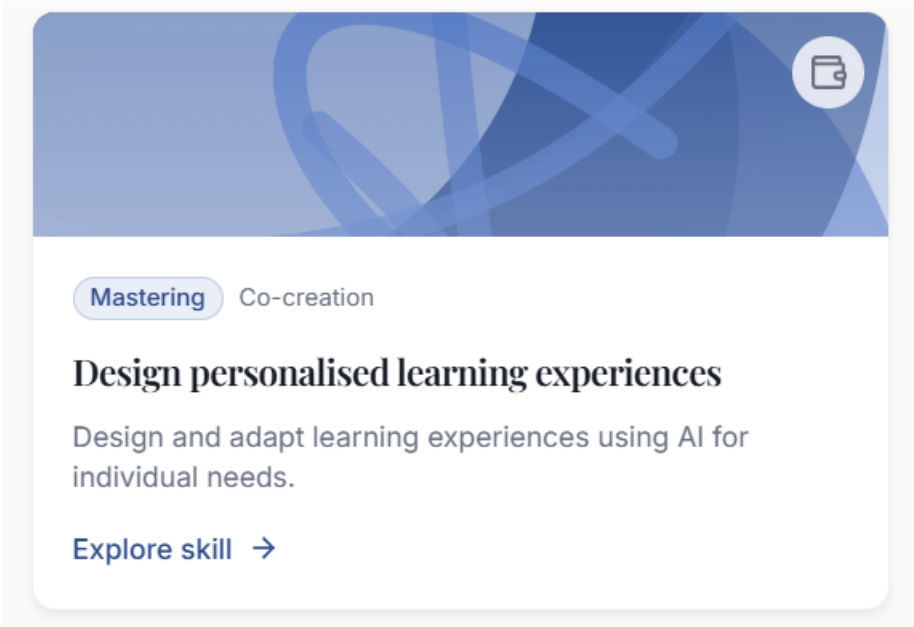


An Educator Resource Pack for Higher Education

Prompt Writing Guides

Ready-Made Templates

Gen AI Skills Continuum



Using Gen AI to create role plays and simulations develops this skill because designing effective scenarios requires you to specify learner profiles, learning goals, and contextual variables, the same decisions that underpin personalised learning design.

Each time you prompt AI to generate a scenario tailored to a particular student need, experience level, or real-world context, you are building your capability to use Gen AI as a tool for creating learning experiences that respond to who the learner is, not just what the content is.

Visit the Skills Continuum for more resources and tips related to this AI Capability: https://aiskillscontinuum.com/skill/design-personalised-learning-experiences

Using AI to Create Role Play & Simulations for Learning

What Works Well

Safe space to practise
Learners can rehearse high-stakes scenarios (difficult conversations, clinical situations, workplace conflicts) without real-world consequences (Maurya, 2025).

Repeatable and scalable
Students run through scenarios multiple times at their own pace, something impossible with human role-play partners.

Personalised challenge
AI can adapt the difficulty or direction of a simulation based on learner responses in real time.

Know the Limitations

Lacks human unpredictability
AI responses can feel scripted or overly reasonable, reducing the authentic messiness of real human interaction.

Shallow emotional nuance
AI may not convincingly replicate emotional complexity, cultural subtlety, or the non-verbal dimensions of real scenarios.

Risk of reinforcing biases
Simulated personas may reflect stereotypes embedded in the model's training data.

Tips for Educators

Design the scenario intentionally
You define the learning objective, the stakes, and the constraints; don't leave this to AI.

Debrief is essential
The simulation is only half the learning. Build in structured reflection to draw out meaning.

Test before you deploy
Run the simulation yourself first to catch where AI responses may mislead or confuse learners.

Frame it clearly for students
Be transparent that they are interacting with AI, this itself is a valuable critical literacy moment.

What This Means for You

You set the scene: AI is the actor, not the director. Your role is to design the learning architecture, brief students well, and ensure rich reflection follows the experience.

Examples in Practice

Behaviour-change conversations are some of the hardest skills for students to master, and yet they rarely get enough safe, low-pressure opportunities to practise them. Emilio Cadaris solved this with Imagino, an AI role-play persona in Val (RMIT's private, secure Generative AI Environment available to students and staff), that enables chiropractic students to practise difficult conversations without stakes.

Students can now fail safely, adjust their approach, and try again - something impossible with standardised patients or real clinical placements.

Watch Emilio Cadaris use case here:

https://youtu.be/9bLsjB5Z184?si=J2GJYfP_227fxYGc&t=649

What This Means for You

This approach extends across a wide range of disciplines and skills — from communication and negotiation to problem-solving, debating, and coaching. You design the scenario; AI creates the space to practise it.

Research Spotlight

Maurya, R. K. (2024). Using AI-based chatbot ChatGPT for practicing counseling skills through role-play. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 19(4), 513–528.* https://doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2023.2297857

Study Context

Discipline: Counselor Education
Setting: Graduate-level Counseling Children & Adolescents course
Delivery: Works for online synchronous and in-person classes

The CCS Model

ChatGPT Client Simulation (CCS) uses an AI chatbot as a simulated client, with the student taking the counselor role. The instructor provides a case vignette prompt that establishes the client's background, presenting issue, and cultural context.

Explicit Instructional Approach

1. **"I do it" - Instructor Role Models**
   Educator models the role-play with ChatGPT, making visible the key counselling behaviours students are expected to demonstrate.
2. **"We do it" - Group Activity:**
   The educator facilitates a collaborative "we do" activity in which a small group of students act as counsellors, others take the role of observers, and ChatGPT serves as the simulated client.
3. **Observation & Discussion**
   students analyse the client's responses, consider appropriate counselling strategies, and provide feedback on the trainee counsellor's approach..
4. **"You do it" - Independent practice:**
   After the group activity, students can continue to use the role play bot to practice skills independently

From Guided to Independent

Classroom scaffolding builds the confidence, and skills students need to use AI independently — opening the door to home practice and AI-integrated assessment.

Advantages

- Allows students to practice counselling skills in a private setting
- Available 24/7
- Free – compared to costs of hiring actor

Anatomy of a Great Role Play Prompt

01
ROLE

Assign the AI a specific character or professional identity.

Example:

You are a skeptical hospital administrator reviewing a budget proposal.

02
CONTEXT

Set the scene: domain, relationship, and background.

Example:

The hospital faces a 15% budget cut. You are meeting with the department head for the first time.

03
OBJECTIVE

State what the student must achieve in the interaction.

Example:

The student must persuade you to protect the nursing staff headcount.

04
CONSTRAINTS

Add realistic friction to deepen the challenge.

Example:

You are time-pressured and data-driven. Resist emotional arguments. Ask for evidence.

05
FORMAT

Specify the interaction style and length.

Example:

Conduct a realistic 10-minute meeting dialogue. Stay in character throughout.

The more specific your prompt, the richer and more realistic the simulation will be.

Skills to practice are endless

Health Sciences

Clinical consultation · Patient history · Breaking bad news · Managing a distressed or non-compliant patient · Counselling Skills

Business & Law

Negotiation · Client advisory · Conflict resolution · Ethical Dilemma · Delivering feedback · Debating · Pitching · Coaching

Education

Parent meeting · Student counselling · Peer feedback · interviewing · student feedback

STEM

Peer review · Research ethics panel · Lab debrief · Explaining complex findings · Peer Feedback

Social Sciences

Interview · Community consultation · Policy debate · Debriefing · Presenting Findings

Design

Defending design decisions · Giving and receiving critique in a design review · Debrief guide · Negotiating scope and timelines with a project manager

Observation + Debrief Guide

Observation Questions: for the instructor or peers watching the simulation

1. What went well in the interaction? What appeared challenging?
2. Is the student actively listening: pausing, following up, avoiding interruptions?
3. How does the student respond when the AI introduces friction or resistance?
4. Is the student adapting their language and tone to the simulated client/context?
5. What skills are clearly evident, and what is noticeably absent?

Debrief Questions: (for the student after the simulation)

1. What went well in the interaction? What felt challenging?
2. Where did you feel uncertain — and how did you manage it?
3. What would you do differently in a real encounter?
4. How did you respond when the AI pushed back or behaved unexpectedly?
5. What skills do you want to practise further before the real thing?

Responsible AI Use in the Classroom

Before the Activity

- Brief students on what the AI can and cannot do
- Explain that AI responses may be imperfect or unexpected
- Set clear learning objectives — what skill is being practised?
- Review your institution's AI use policy with students
- Ensure equitable access to the AI tool for all students

During the Activity

- Remind students to stay in the educational frame
- Encourage critical engagement — challenge AI responses
- Monitor for AI outputs that may be inappropriate or inaccurate
- Avoid collecting personally identifiable information in prompts
- Set a time limit to maintain focus

After the Activity

- Always debrief — reflection is where deep learning happens
- Discuss where the AI was and wasn't realistic
- Do not grade AI performance — assess student response and reflection
- Collect student feedback to improve future activities
- Document your prompt for future reuse and peer sharing

Your Quick-Start Action Plan

1

Pick One Scenario

Choose a skill gap or practice need in your current unit. Which professional interaction do students struggle with most?

2

Write Your RCOEF Prompt

Use the template: Role → Context → Objective → frEction → Format. Aim for 5 focused sentences.

3

Test It Yourself First

Run the simulation as if you were the student. Refine your prompt until the AI responds realistically.

4

Pilot with One Group

Try with a small cohort first. Observe how students engage and where the AI falls short.

5

Debrief and Collect Data

Use the debrief questions provided. Ask students what was useful. Adjust your prompt accordingly.

6

Share and Iterate

Share your prompt with colleagues. The best simulations are refined over multiple cycles of use.

Advanced Options

Types of AI Role Play & Simulation — from accessible to immersive

↑ Increasing immersion

01 Text-Based Chat

Students type and receive written AI responses. No setup beyond a browser. Easy to screenshot for review or assessment.

Cost: Free

Setup: Minutes

Tools: Val, Claude, ChatGPT

★ *Dialogue, counseling, negotiation, advisory*

02 Voice Conversation

Students speak aloud; AI responds verbally in real time. Adds the pressure of spoken response closer to authentic practice.

Cost: Free–Low

Setup: Minutes

Tools: Val, ChatGPT Voice, Gemini Live

★ *Health, law, education — where verbal fluency matters*

03 Scenario Platforms

Purpose-built tools with pre-designed professional scenarios. Less flexible but consistent — useful when standardisation matters.

Cost: Medium

Setup: Days

Tools:

★ *Large cohorts, validated assessments*

04 AI Video Simulation

AI video avatars create a face-to-face feel without a human actor. Increasingly viable for standardised patient or client scenarios.

Cost: Medium

Setup: Hours

Tools: Synthesia, HeyGen

★ *Standardised patient, client-facing practice*

05 Game-Based / Branching

Branching decision trees where student choices drive outcomes. AI layers in dynamic responses. Well-suited to ethics and crisis scenarios.

Cost: Low–Med

Setup: Weeks

Tools:

★ *Ethics, triage, crisis management*

06 VR / Immersive Simulation

Students placed inside a 3D environment with AI characters responding in real time. Highest impact for high-stakes scenarios.

Cost: High

Setup: Months

Tools:

★ *Surgical, emergency, courtroom scenarios*

Start with text-based chat — it's free, instant, and effective. Upgrade the modality as your confidence and resourcing grows.