

Ctrl + V? No Thanks.

I could just type the theme of this essay into ChatGPT, watch paragraphs magically appear before me, copy the whole thing, and call it a day. No effort, no stress. Just *Ctrl + C*, *Ctrl + V*.

But then — where's the satisfaction in something I didn't write myself?

I've always taken pride in my work. I'm an academic achiever. A campus journalist. A feature writer who spends hours shaping stories and ideas. I'm the kind of person who rewrites a paragraph five times until it sounds right. In our publication, I don't just write—I design, I curate, I pour parts of myself into the work we publish. So, it only makes sense that integrity matters to me—not just in journalism, but in every academic thing I do.

In group projects, I watch as my classmates type: “@Meta AI, answer this.” They paste the response straight into the shared doc and proudly say, “*O ayan, nag-ambag na ako.*” That's it. That's their whole contribution. Sometimes, they even joke about it. “*So easy naman pala eh. Wag ka na magpaka-stress, ma'am leader,*” don't stress about it they say. Meanwhile, I'm triple-checking sources, writing from scratch, and formatting everything. But in the end, we all get the same grade.

I'd be lying if I said that didn't sting.

At some point, the jealousy started to weigh heavy. It felt unfair. They didn't put in the same effort, yet we landed in the same place. And slowly, I started to ask myself: *Why try so hard when shortcuts are everywhere?*

That's when the temptation crept in.

It was a science assignment—write a short essay about how gas is everywhere in our lives. Simple topic. But I was tired, overwhelmed, and burned out. I didn't want to think critically or reflect. I just wanted it done.

So, I opened ChatGPT. Typed in the prompt. Watched it write a full paragraph instantly. It sounded okay. Generic, but passable. I highlighted the paragraph and pushed Ctrl + C on my keyboard.

Just about when I was to hit Ctrl + V, *I froze.*

I didn't want to admit it at the time, but I felt like I was betraying myself. This wasn't just about an essay anymore—it was about my integrity as a student, as a writer, as someone who's always cared about originality. I've always said that the heart of writing lies in its soul, in the honesty of the person behind words. And here I was, ready to submit something I didn't write. It felt soulless. Mechanical. *Not mine.*

I closed the tab.

I guess that moment was my wake-up call. The realization that AI, for all its usefulness, can blur the lines too easily. One click, and you lose the essence of what you're trying to say. And that's terrifying, especially for someone who believes that our words matter.

But here's the twist: *AI isn't a villain.*

Funny right? Vill'*AI'n.* I used to think of it that way—like some evil digital entity stealing people's creativity. But eventually, I realized that it's not evil. It's just a tool. And like any tool, it depends on how you use it.

I've started using AI differently now. When I struggle with math problems, I ask it to explain things step by step—like how to solve the Pythagorean Theorem—So I can actually understand it instead of just memorizing the answer. When I want to review, I ask it to generate practice quizzes I can take on my own. Sometimes, I brainstorm with it just to explore different directions. But the final words, the ideas, the heart of my work? They're still mine.

That's what ethical use looks like: *support, not substitution.*

It's about using AI to enhance your understanding, not to bypass it. To guide, not to replace. It's about remembering that the journey—messy, tiring, as frustrating as it can be—is still yours to walk. And there's something powerful about that.

But beyond the academic lens, there's something we tend to overlook: the environmental cost of AI. I read an article from *The Conversation* about how training AI models uses up massive amounts of energy—energy that contributes to carbon emissions. I was shocked. For something that feels “invisible” and effortless on screen, it turns out there's a heavy footprint behind every generated response. All the computing, the data centers—it adds up.

It made me reflect even more deeply on how I use AI. If I'm going to do something for me, it better be worth the cost—not just in terms of ethics, but impact. The convenience we enjoy comes at a price we don't always see.

But the truth is, AI isn't going anywhere. It's becoming part of every student's life, whether we like it or not. It's already in our search engines, our calculators, and our grammar checkers. Pretending we can live without it is unrealistic. That's why it's not just resisting AI—it's about redefining how we interact with it.

Maybe schools should start teaching AI literacy the way we're taught digital citizenship. We need to learn how to question its outputs, check sources, and understand its limits. After all, if we're going to use it, we should know how it works. Blind trust in AI is just as dangerous as blind copying.

As a campus journalist and a student who values integrity, I believe part of being a responsible AI user is critical. Not everything AI says is true. Not every suggestion makes sense. And the moment we rely on it too much, we stop developing the most important skill we have; our ability to think. Thoughtfulness—that's what's at stake. Not grades, not convenience, but our ability to reason for ourselves.

And maybe that's what this all comes down to: awareness.

Knowing when to pause. Knowing when to ask, "*Is this truly helping me learn?*" or "*Am I just cutting corners?*" It's being honest enough to admit when you're tempted, but strong enough to step back and remember why you started in the first place.

So, how will I use AI?

I'll use it with care. With consciousness. With a little more heart.

AI isn't the enemy. Laziness is. And it's easy to fall into that trap when convenience is just one click away. But if there's anything I've learned, it's that nothing beats the quiet kind of pride that comes from knowing: *I made this. I thought this. I worked for this.*

So yes, I could've just copied a whole essay from AI. But I didn't.

Ctrl + V?

No thanks.