The STAIR Method

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

IT-UNIVERSITETET I KØBENHAVN

Welcome To The STAIR Guide

This guide is your entry point to working with the STAIR methodology – a simple, structured way to reflect on your use of Generative AI. You don't need to be an AI specialist, IT professional or project manager. Anyone can use this guide to ask thoughtful questions and explore the role of AI in your context.

STAIR is based on socio-technical research. It sees AI not just as a digital tool, but as a force that reshapes tasks, decisions, relationships, and values.

Use the guide to:

- Talk in a participatory way about opportunities, doubts, and dilemmas
- Reflect on specific use-cases or general attitudes
- Align your AI use with your professional values and goals

Whether you're just getting started or already experimenting with AI, STAIR helps you stay grounded, critical, and curious.

The 8 sociotechnical principles

The following eight principles have been created by a communications department in a major Danish administration. They are in many ways universal and directional and can therefore be used in most contexts where you want to start a reflective conversation about the use of Generative AI.

The principles are based on socio-technical research, and they emphasise the importance of factors such as professionalism, meaning, well-being, social relations and learning.

If you want to take a more thorough approach, we recommend that you develop your own principles that are rooted in your particular context and needs. The principles should take into account what the research points to – but there can be many ways to formulate them and different needs and perspectives that you want to include. This process can be the first steps in working with STAIR. See more at **www.STAIRmethod.org**.

STAIR: When we use Generative AI:

ST- principle	Individual	Group	Unit	Org.	Corp.	National
1. It should add value to the work	I have a perception that the use of Generative AI adds value.	We collaborate and share experiences about the value of using Generative AI.	We evaluate and assess the value of using Generative AI in our work.			
2. We have frameworks and guidelines	I know the applicable frameworks and guidelines and contribute to their development.	We collaborate and share experiences about the use of frameworks and guidelines.	We ensure a process where frameworks and guidelines are continuously updated and aligned with KK's guidelines and national laws.			
3. There is room for experimentation and learning	I have the opportunity to experiment and can seek learning opportunities.	We collaborate and share experiences about our learning and experiments with Generative AI.	We ensure that there are learning opportunities.			
4. We have the right competencies or the opportunity to develop them	I am aware of whether I have the right competencies.	We help and support each other in building competencies.	We support the opportunity to build the right competencies.			
5. We consider relationships and social aspects in relevant workflows	I am aware of whether Generative AI negatively affects relationships and social aspects.	We create social and professional occasions to maintain relationships within the group and with collaborators.	We strengthen relational and interpersonal aspects of the work through social and professional occasions.			
6. We maintain responsibility and autonomy in the task	I determine how I use Generative AI.	We respect each other's autonomy and help and support each other in maintaining it.	We support that autonomy in the use of Generative AI belongs to those closest to the task.			
7. The use supports our professionalism and creativity	I feel that my professional identity is maintained or strengthened.	We support each other in choices that can affect our professionalism and creativity.	We create frameworks to discuss how Generative AI can affect or strengthen our professionalism.			
8. We consider ethical implications	I have the opportunity to express my ethical considerations.	We discuss ethical challenges and considerations that should be taken into account.	We incorporate ethical perspectives into our decisions and ongoing learning about Generative AI.			

How To Facilitate A STAIR Session

You don't need to be an AI expert, digital strategist or project manager to get started with STAIR. Anyone, from a frontline employee to a specialist or team lead, can initiate a meaningful, critical conversation about Generative AI in your organization. Here's how:

1. Choose your Focus
Pick a theme to guide your conversation. It could be:
- A general discussion about AI: What are your hopes, worries, doubts or opportunities?
- A specific use-case: Something you're already trying or considering using AI for.

2. Use the STAIR Guide
Use the eight STAIR principles as your conversation framework. You don't need to cover all of them - just pick the ones that feel most relevant.

Each principle is accompanied by simple, clarifying questions. These are reflection prompts that help spark your thinking.

3. Facilitate, Don't Control
Your role is not to be the expert—it's to create space for reflection. Be curious, neutral, and open. Let people think aloud. Share the guide in advance or bring printouts for inspiration.

4. Make it Your Own
The STAIR principles were developed by a public sector team, but you are encouraged to tailor them to your context. Want to make it more thorough? Co-create your own principles and adjust the questions to match your team's work and values.

5. Capture Reflections
You don't need a formal report, but noting down insights, tensions or questions raised during the session can be valuable. For instance on a STAIR board – using your preferred project management tool. This can inform your decisions, shape internal policies, or simply support ongoing learning and reflection. It can even serve as an idea bank, as you work your way through use-cases and ideas.

Remember: STAIR is fundamentally a mindset about building a shared, reflective intuition on how you approach AI. It's simple, flexible, and designed to empower. Not to overcomplicate.

Tips for the STAIR Master

- First, ask for a description of the use case. Be curious

- It is not an interrogation, but a conversation.

- Use the principles as your support and question guide, but not as a checklist. You do not have to slavishly go through everyone.

- Be neutral and as far as possible let the interviewee reflect for themselves – but feel free to push the conversation away with perspectives, e.g. from the question guide.

Question Guide

1. Principle

Generativ AI should add value to the work

t is important to have a clear understanding of the value that Generative AI brings.

This value can range from benefits to your recipients (customers, citizens, stakeholders, etc.) to benefits for you as a user, your colleagues, and your organisation or business.

Value might include increased productivity, higher quality, improved well-being, learning and development, professional expertise, and new competencies.

One type of value isn't necessarily better than another. It depends on context and needs. However, it's essential to be conscious of this.

Examples of clarification questions

- Does AI create the desired value for your users, business or task?

- Is there a risk of losing value as well? Where? And are you willing to take that risk? Does it require action?

- Is the value sustainable in relation to the effort? What is the relationship between the short-term and the long-term value?

- What value does Generative AI create or remove for the employees who will work with it?

2. Principle

We have frameworks and guidelines for our use of Generative AI

Frameworks and guidelines serve as your ground rules for using Generative AI.

What's important is that these exist, that you know them, and that you have access to them, as they contribute to confidence and security - for yourselves, your organization, and your customers, users, and recipients.

They may be adjusted regularly to match evolving knowledge and experience, but naturally must also comply with legislation and regulations.

Examples of clarification questions

- Are there guidelines and frameworks in your organisation for the use of Generative AI that you need to take into account?

- Do you know them and do you have access to them?

- Is there a need for you to develop new guidelines that are more specific in relation to your particular professional area?

- Do you have opinions about when you will never use Generative AI? It can be about specific products and solutions, or it can be different workflows that you do not want to automate, fully or partially, with Generative AI.

3. Principle

We have the opportunity to experiment with and learn from Generative AI

Generative AI is a technology that is changing all the time and fast. Therefore, it is important that there is continuously the opportunity to try out new opportunities, continuously experiment and learn – so that you can adapt along the way.

Examples of clarification questions

- How do you create a safe learning environment with the opportunity to share experiences and learn from mistakes and success?

- How do you find the right technologies and resources to try them out?

- Do you have a culture that allows or practical opportunities to legitimately experiment and use Generative AI?

- Do you have the opportunity to drop a solution if the learning shows that it is in one way or another too heavy, difficult or in some other way inappropriate?

4. Principle

We have the right competencies or the opportunity to build them

Generative AI is a new technology that you have to learn how to use. This may mean, for example, that time and resources have been set aside for the necessary research and for any courses, subscriptions and knowledge sharing.

It can be difficult to know in advance what skills are needed. The introduction of a technology can change workflows and outputs, and this can mean a need for new skills that were not previously part of the toolbox.

Examples of clarification questions

- What competencies do you already have in relation to Generative AI?

- How do you find resources to maintain, practice, or learn?

- How do we get a better understanding of the potentials and pitfalls of Generative AI?

- What new competencies does a changed workflow or new use of Generative AI possibly bring? Which skills may be less needed in the future?

5. Principle

We consider relationships and social aspects in the relevant workflows

When we change workflows or solve tasks, it can affect relationships and social aspects.

The work with Generative AI can both reduce, change or affect knowledge sharing and social aspects of task solving.

It is important to be aware of these changes. For example, it may be that you need to do something compensatory because you assess a specific use of Generative AI could have an impact here.

Examples of clarification questions

- Are there any special working methods or networks you want to preserve?

- Do you get energy, ideas or informal sparring in workflows that can be replaced?

- Do you talk about which relationships are valuable in your work tasks? And how do you retain or strengthen them despite changes in task solving?

6. Principle

We maintain responsibility and autonomy in the work task

Generative AI, such as language models, can in many cases be used as a personal assistant. For example, by contributing with considerations, analyses and arguments. The challenge may be that the language models can "hallucinate" or have certain types of bias, just as we may transfer and delegate our decision-making authority to it.

It is therefore important to be very aware of when Generative AI is the right tool for the specific task. And whether the individual user should have the opportunity not to use the technology.

Examples of clarification questions

- Is Generative AI the right tool for the task at hand? Do you have knowledge of other types of technologies or tools that could be more relevant?

- What do you do if someone feels pressured and reluctant to use Generative AI? Do they have the option not to use it? Should they have it?

- Who is responsible for solving the tasks? And have they been involved in the decision to use Generative AI?

7. Principle

The use of Generative AI supports our professionalism and creativity

Generative AI can summarise, structure, give feedback, or come up with new angles on tasks that need to be solved. It can realise visual concepts and provide inspiration for content.

Thus, it can often contribute to task solving, support people's professionalism and creativity.

Here it is important to be aware that technology acts as a contributor that we experience strengthens our professionalism or creativity.

Examples of clarification questions

- What is our basic professionalism and core task?

- Do we use Generative AI to support and perhaps strengthen that professionalism? Or does it replace it?

- What responsibility do we not want to hand over to Generative AI?

- Does Generative AI inhibit or contribute to creativity in task solving? Are there any points of attention in this regard?

8. Principle

We consider ethical implications

There are many good reasons to think ethically when it comes to Generative AI. As a technology, Generative AI is in many ways opaque and difficult to control. It produces content based on probabilities, and the models have trained on content that may have been created by other people - who have not given permission for their data to be used to train the models, and used in commercial contexts.

Generative AI can create confusion and insecurity for users and recipients. Especially if it is unclear why it is used and for what effect. For example, use the Digital Ethics Compass (Danish Design Centre) to navigate ethical issues that may be relevant in relation to content, technology and law.

Examples of clarification questions

- Is it clear if and what Generative AI has contributed to in an end product?

- How do you avoid manipulating users or creating inequality in the user experience?

- How do you ensure that users can distinguish between reality and stay in control? The same applies to the recipients.

- Are there any special ethical, individual considerations of the citizens or beneficiaries that are important? For example, copyright, climate issues or others?

- If you need a more thorough ethical stance, it is recommended to use the Digital Ethics Compass: DDC – Danish Design Center | Toolbox: The Digital Ethics Compass.

Learn more about STAIR

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Kan generativ AI være med til at skabe værdi og mening på jobbet?

AI Denmark

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Podcast-episode

Episode #46 | Martin Lassen-Vernal & Louise Harder Fischer | A negotiated - not just automated - future

The Only Constant