

THE PROOF MACHINE

A field guide to asking better questions, building useful experiments, and making honest use of AI assistance.

MR ALMOST FAMOUS / FEAT. CHATGPT • FIELD GUIDE 001 • 27 OCTOBER 2026

Fame is not the product. The work is.

This guide accompanies the interactive tool at mralmostfamousfeatchatgpt.sahilwho.online. It is an original practical guide, not a validation study, a therapeutic intervention, or a claim that everything in the public Sahilverse index is online.

1. THE FOUR-COLUMN THINKING CARD

Almost any provocative idea becomes clearer when separated into four parts: an observation, an interpretation, a competing explanation, and a possible test. Conflating these is how beautiful stories become false certainty.

Observation: What was actually seen, measured, said or built?

Interpretation: What do you think it might mean?

Alternative: What else could produce the same observation?

Test: What different outcome should appear if one explanation fits better?

Example: "Readers are harsher toward AI-assisted writing." Before accepting that statement, distinguish writing quality from attitudes toward the process, tool-use disclosure, familiarity, and expectations.

Rule: a plausible alternative explanation is not automatically the true explanation either. It is a reason to gather better evidence.

2. TURN AN INTUITION INTO A TESTABLE QUESTION

An intuition such as "interactive sites teach better" sounds convincing, but it includes undefined terms. Who is learning? What do you mean by better? Over what period? Compared with what other format?

Rewrite: In a voluntary, low-stakes learning task, do participants who use one interactive example explain a new application of the concept more clearly than participants who read a matched plain-text explanation?

This rewrite does not establish that interactions work better. It simply makes a limited comparison possible.

3. THE SMALLEST HONEST STUDY

- 01 / Define one question and one primary outcome before collecting responses.
- 02 / Choose a meaningful comparison; change as few features as reasonably possible.
- 03 / Seek voluntary informed participation. Avoid collecting identifying or sensitive information unnecessarily.
- 04 / Document instructions, conditions and any exclusions so another person can understand what happened.
- 05 / Record surprises, missing data and failures instead of quietly editing them away.
- 06 / State limitations. A small convenience sample or self-experiment does not prove a broad claim.

FOUR EXPERIMENTS TO STEAL

Use these as thought-starters. Adapt them ethically, make consent explicit, and avoid unsupported generalisations.

A. AI AUTHORSHIP: QUALITY VS. DISCLOSURE

Idea: People may judge a piece differently after learning that an AI tool was involved.

Alternative: Disapproval may concern the perceived process, disclosure framing, or attribution rather than the quality of the text.

Possible comparison: Display identical original samples, with and without a process note, to separately consenting participants. Ask what criteria shaped their ratings. Do not present fabricated study results.

Limit: Results depend on audience, framing, genre, and recruitment; they cannot settle the originality of all AI-assisted work.

B. EDUCATION: A SCORE IS NOT THE WHOLE LEARNER

Idea: Grade-based performance and transferable understanding sometimes diverge.

Alternative: Apparent divergence could be due to different task difficulty, preparation, or vague scoring criteria.

Possible comparison: Compare answers on recall questions and an unfamiliar application task. Write the evaluation rubric before viewing responses.

Limit: A short test does not reveal a person's total ability, potential or worth.

C. SCENT: MEANING IS NOT A MOLECULE

Idea: Fragrance descriptions can shape expectations and emotional associations.

Alternative: Some reactions may arise from familiarity, individual memory, sensory sensitivity, or the scent itself.

Possible comparison: With informed consent and safe, non-irritating materials, compare free-text descriptions under different labels. Do not confuse this with clinical evidence or formulation science.

Limit: Avoid medical promises; take allergies, sensitivities and individual differences seriously.

D. STATUS: PUBLIC APPLAUSE VS. PRIVATE SATISFACTION

Idea: The audience may change how someone defines success.

Alternative: Differences may reflect question framing, immediate mood or social expectations.

Possible comparison: Invite private definitions of success under two carefully framed prompts. Look for differences without ranking the participants.

Limit: Self-reports cannot directly expose hidden motives or enduring wellbeing.

WHEN YOU INVITE CHATGPT IN

Good collaboration is not the same as automatic deference. Let a tool challenge the hypothesis, never merely congratulate the author.

4. THE FIVE-PART AI HANDOFF

1. Describe the question: What is being proposed and why does it matter?
2. Supply context: Include public project links and short descriptions, but tell the model not to claim it read inaccessible URLs.
3. Ask for counterarguments: Request the strongest competing explanation and the conditions under which it would win.

4. Define output boundaries: Ask for one–page protocols, useful deliverables, clear methods and explicit uncertainty.
5. Verify outside the model: Check claims, papers, URLs, quotations, numerical results and provenance independently.

A COPY–READY PROMPT

"Here is my question: [insert question]. Help me define the key terms, identify two serious alternatives, propose a modest ethically acceptable test, specify one observable outcome, and explain exactly what such a test would NOT prove. Distinguish what is observed, what is inferred and what is imagined. Do not invent sources or claim you inspected unavailable URLs. Give a short prototype or writing outline, then your strongest critique."

5. ATTRIBUTION WITHOUT THEATRE

The useful disclosure is specific: what the person conceived, selected, revised and checked, and what an AI tool actually supplied. "AI assisted" alone does not describe the division of labour. Neither does "human–made" prove craft. Attribution matters, but quality still needs to be assessed.

A model disclosure: "Concept and editorial decisions: human. Brainstorming and implementation assistance: ChatGPT. Claims reviewed and final decisions retained by the author." Make this sentence accurate for the project at hand.

6. FROM THE ATLAS TO AN ACTUAL PRODUCT

The Sahilverse is a catalogue of works in progress, essays and browser experiments. A catalogue entry is not a scientific endorsement and not a live uptime check. Rather than merely linking to pages, the Proof Machine uses the collection as subject matter for comparison, criticism and creation.

Start with three worlds: one closely related to the question, another that approaches it differently, and a third that complicates the original frame. Open the works themselves before summarising them. If a link fails, mark the uncertainty.

The current engine uses rule–based matching against public titles, descriptions and tags. A live Atlas feed is used when available; a curated selection powers the fallback. No AI request is made until the visitor explicitly chooses to use ChatGPT separately.

WORKSHEET & RESOURCES

7. ONE-PAGE EXPERIMENT SHEET

QUESTION _____

OBSERVATION _____

INTERPRETATION _____

STRONGEST ALTERNATIVE _____

ONE OUTCOME TO OBSERVE _____

SMALL, LOW-RISK TEST _____

WHAT WOULD CHANGE MY MIND? _____

CONFOUND / LIMITATION _____

ONE USEFUL THING TO BUILD _____

8. READING AND PRACTICE

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy — Scientific Method: plato.stanford.edu/entries/scientific-method/

NIST — AI Risk Management Framework: nist.gov/itl/ai-risk-management-framework

W3C WAI — Web Content Accessibility Guidelines: w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/

Sahilverse canonical public archive: sahiltayal.com

Sahil Who? — six ways to examine a public creative identity: sahilwho.online

The Proof Machine — interactive brief creator: mralmostfamousfeatchatgpt.sahilwho.online

9. END NOTE

You do not need to win a status contest to make a worthwhile artifact. Ideas earn credibility by exposing their methods and their limits. This project was human-directed and prepared with AI-assisted implementation. ChatGPT is an OpenAI product; this independent work is not affiliated with or endorsed by OpenAI.

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