Utilizing ChatGPT for Lawyers: A Comprehensive Guide

Lawyers are hearing about generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Law GPT, and other "ChatGPT for law" platforms everywhere, but it's not always clear what uses are safe and which put client data and accuracy at risk.

AI can speed up routine drafting, research organization, and client communication—but it also brings risks like hallucinations, biased results, and mishandled sensitive data.

We'll walk through examples of ways to use ChatGPT for lawyers, helpful prompts, and the guardrails you should put in place so every AI-assisted draft is checked, verified, and brought up to your firm's standards before it ever reaches a client or a court.

Practical Ways Lawyers Can Use ChatGPT Today

For lawyers, the safest and most valuable uses of ChatGPT are places where you're already the expert and just need a faster starting point. Think of it as a drafting and organizing assistant, not a stand-in for legal judgment.

Here are some practical ways to build it into your day-to-day work.

1. Replying to Routine Emails

Email can become a major time sink, especially when you're staring at a full inbox. ChatGPT can draft quick, well-structured responses to routine messages, including:

- Client updates

- Follow-ups
- Scheduling and meetings
- Confirmation and clarification

Before you paste anything into ChatGPT, remove or redact client names, matter numbers, and any details that could identify a person or case—unless your firm is using a vetted, secure AI tool covered by your confidentiality policy.

After removing sensitive details, paste in the email you received, tell it the points you want to cover, and let it generate a first draft that you review and tweak before sending.

For even more security—and less manual work—use [legal Client Relationship Management (CRM) tools](#) to handle lead and client follow-up automatically. A CRM can track new leads, schedule reminders, and send nurturing emails on a set cadence, so you stay responsive without copying sensitive information into a general-purpose AI tool.

2. Refining Notes and Transcripts

Rough notes and raw transcripts are hard to work from. While ChatGPT doesn't transcribe audio itself, it's very useful once you have a transcript from a separate tool.

With data sharing and training settings turned off, you can ask ChatGPT to clean up the language, organize issues, extract key points, or turn messy bullet points into a coherent summary or outline. This way, you spend your time analyzing what was said, not wrestling with unstructured text.

3. Drafting Legal Documents (with Review)

One of the most compelling uses of ChatGPT for lawyers is generating first-draft documents (contracts, engagement letters, policies, or clauses) based on your own instructions and examples.

It can help you get from blank page to working draft much faster. But every AI-generated draft still needs a lawyer or paralegal to check citations, correct the law, adjust tone, and tailor the content to the matter.

If you're working with sensitive client or matter information, you may want to use a more secure, purpose-built tool instead of pasting details into ChatGPT.

For example, [TimeSolv's document management feature](#) allows you to build custom document templates that automatically pull in saved information, so you can generate repeat documents quickly without re-entering data or exposing confidential details to a general AI tool.

4. Reviewing and Summarizing Documents

Legal documents are dense, and there are often a lot of them to work through. ChatGPT can help you move faster by summarizing non-confidential briefs, discovery, contracts, or transcripts and highlighting key issues, obligations, dates, or terms.

You can also prompt it to list potential risk areas or questions to ask a client about a document you've already reviewed.

In each of these scenarios, AI is speeding up the "blank page" phase, but you're still responsible for checking the output, adding the legal substance, and deciding what actually goes in front of a client, court, or opposing counsel.

AI Risks Lawyers Need to Watch For

Even when you're "just" using ChatGPT for drafting help or organizing information, you should take careful steps before and after use to double-check outputs for accuracy, check for bias in the answers you receive, and keep data confidential.

Hallucinated or Outdated Law

ChatGPT is good at sounding confident, but it doesn't actually "know" the law or your jurisdiction. It can invent cases ("hallucinate"), misstate rules, or rely on outdated information.

Any time you use AI to brainstorm arguments, draft clauses, or summarize legal concepts, you should treat the output as a rough starting point and

independently verify every citation, fact, and statement of law before it makes its way into your work product.

Bias in the Results

AI tools are trained on large datasets that can reflect real-world bias. That means ChatGPT's answers may lean in a particular direction, overlook important perspectives, or reinforce stereotypes without you realizing it.

When you use ChatGPT for law—to brainstorm arguments, analyze scenarios, or describe people or disputes—read the output with a critical eye: ask what's missing, what assumptions it's making, and whether you need to correct or balance the result before relying on it.

Confidentiality and Sensitive Information

The biggest AI risk for many firms is confidentiality. If you paste client names, matter details, or other sensitive information into a general-purpose AI tool that isn't specifically covered by your firm's policies or vendor agreements, you may be exposing that data in ways you don't intend.

As a rule of thumb, remove or redact identifying details before using ChatGPT, and lean on secure, vetted legal tools (like your practice management system or document automation) for anything that touches confidential client data.

Every AI-assisted task still needs a lawyer's review, and your firm should decide up front what's off-limits and what must always be verified so AI never substitutes for your own legal judgment.

Prompts and Best Practices for Using ChatGPT in Legal Work

To get real value from ChatGPT in a law practice, you need more than clever prompts. You need clear boundaries, a repeatable process, and the right tools supporting it.

1. Decide Where AI Fits in Your Workflow

Start by choosing specific places where AI can genuinely help: first-draft emails, outlines, checklists, or summaries of non-confidential documents. These are low-risk tasks where you're already the expert and just need a faster starting point.

For example, instead of asking ChatGPT to "draft a contract," you might prompt it to:

"List the key clauses for a vendor agreement between a small law firm and an IT provider, then draft a plain-language version of each clause."

And instead of asking your AI tool to draft a contract clause, you could prompt it more specifically:

"Act as an assistant helping with a first draft of a contract clause. Draft a plain-language [type of clause, e.g., 'limitation of liability'] for an agreement between a small law firm and a business client. Use neutral, reasonable language and flag any choices I need to make (e.g., dollar caps, time limits). Do not cite any specific laws or cases."

You still own the decision about what goes into the final document, but you skip the blank-page stage.

2. Treat AI as a First Draft, Not the Final Answer

Every piece of AI output should be treated as a draft or research aid. Never copy-paste ChatGPT outputs into a brief or send them directly to a client.

That means:

- **Always review and edit** AI text for accuracy, tone, and fit for your jurisdiction.
- **Independently verify** any cases, statutes, or legal rules ChatGPT mentions.
- **Use AI to brainstorm** arguments, issue-spot, or structure a document, then layer your own analysis on top.

A simple rule you can share firmwide: If your name is on it, you've reviewed it as if AI wasn't involved at all.

3. Protect Client Data in Every Prompt

Confidentiality needs to be front and center any time you use AI. Before you paste anything into ChatGPT, ask: "If this email or text were forwarded to the wrong person, would that be a problem?"

Good data protection habits here include:

- Removing or redacting client names, matter numbers, and identifying details
- Using generic descriptions instead of specific facts (e.g., "employment dispute" instead of the actual company name)
- Avoiding public AI tools altogether for sensitive or privileged information

You can use a sample prompt like this for a safe email reply after redacting sensitive details:

"Draft a professional but plain-language reply to this client email. I want to: [list key points, e.g., acknowledge receipt, set expectations for timing, ask for one missing document]. Keep it to 2–3 short paragraphs and avoid legal jargon. Here's the (anonymized) email: [PASTE TEXT]."

For work that does involve confidential data—like document generation or matter-related emails—it's safer to rely on secure, purpose-built tools.

For example, a platform like TimeSolv can store client and matter details and use them in document templates or automated follow-ups without you copying that data into a public AI tool.

4. Build Firm wide AI Policies and Guardrails

Safe AI use can't just live in one lawyer's head. Your firm should have a simple written policy that covers a variety of use cases:

- Which tools are approved (and which are not)
- What types of work AI can be used for (and what's off-limits)

- How staff should handle client data in prompts
- What level of review is required before AI-assisted work goes out the door

You might also include sample prompts for common, safe tasks—like drafting routine emails or summarizing non-confidential documents—so everyone starts from the same playbook.

The next section shows how to put that policy and workflow in place at your firm, including a sample AI use policy you can adapt.

Want a quick, visual checklist to reinforce these habits?

Download your free time-tracking best practices infographic.

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Implementing an AI Policy and Workflow at Your Firm

Once you understand where ChatGPT and AI tools can help as well as the risks, the next step is to make its use consistent across your firm.

That means choosing the right tools, setting clear rules, and giving everyone a simple process to follow. The goal is an AI workflow that saves time, protects clients, and never replaces your professional judgment.

Choose the Right AI and Legal Tools

Start by deciding which tools your firm will approve. Public, consumer AI tools might be fine for generic drafting or idea generation with anonymized inputs, but anything involving client or matter data should live in secure, vetted systems.

Look closely at security, data storage, confidentiality terms, and how AI features integrate with tools you already use—like your practice management platform, document automation, or legal CRM—so you're not copying sensitive information into random apps.

Set Rules for AI Use

Next, translate your decisions into a short, written policy everyone can follow. Spell out which AI tools are allowed, what types of tasks they can be used for, and what's off-limits (for example: no privileged details in public tools, no unreviewed AI output sent to clients or courts).

Clarify who is responsible for review and signing off on AI-assisted work. The aim is to remove guesswork so attorneys and staff know exactly when AI is appropriate and what checks are required.

Train Your Team and Sharing Sample Prompts

Even a good policy won't stick if people don't know how to apply it. Offer brief training on safe use cases, risks to watch for, and examples of good vs. bad prompts.

Create a shared library of approved prompts for common tasks so everyone starts from the same baseline. Over time, you can refine this library based on what actually works in your practice.

Sample AI Use Policy for Law Firms

Your AI use policy is important. Drafting one is simple with a guide. You can even use ChatGPT to create yours with a prompt like this:

"I'm drafting an internal 'ChatGPT For Lawyers' safety checklist for my law firm. Based on general best practices (not jurisdiction-specific), list 8–10 bullet points lawyers should follow when using generative AI tools, focusing on confidentiality, verifying citations, and treating AI as a first draft only."

Here's an example of how an AI use policy could look for a law firm:

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how lawyers and staff at [Firm Name] may use artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including large language models like ChatGPT, to support legal work while protecting client confidentiality and maintaining professional standards.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all attorneys, paralegals, and staff who use AI tools in connection with firm work, whether on firm systems or personal devices.

3. Approved vs. Unapproved Tools

Approved tools: Only AI tools that have been reviewed and approved by the firm (e.g., specific features within our practice management or document tools) may be used with client or matter-related information.

Unapproved tools: Public or consumer AI tools (e.g., the free version of ChatGPT in a browser) may not be used with any confidential or identifiable client information.

The firm will maintain a list of approved AI tools and update it as needed.

4. Permitted Uses of AI

AI may be used to assist with, but not limited to, the following tasks:

- Drafting first drafts of routine emails and letters that you will review and edit
- Creating outlines, checklists, and bullet-point summaries of non-confidential materials
- Brainstorming arguments, issues, or questions for further legal research and analysis
- Rewriting or simplifying firm-created content into plain language for clients
- Suggesting structure or headings for legal documents based on your instructions

In all cases, AI output is a starting point only. The responsible lawyer remains fully accountable for the final work product.

5. Prohibited Uses of AI

AI tools must not be used for:

- Providing unreviewed legal advice to clients

- Drafting documents or filings that are sent out without human review
- Conducting final legal research or relying on AI-generated citations without verification
- Uploading or describing confidential, privileged, or identifiable client information into any unapproved AI tool
- Using AI outputs as if they were authoritative statements of law, court rules, or ethics guidance

6. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Do not enter client names, matter names, case numbers, or other identifying details into public AI tools.

Do not upload full documents containing confidential or privileged information into public AI tools.

When in doubt, anonymize or redact information, or do not use AI for that task.

For work involving sensitive data, use only firm-approved, secure systems (e.g., [TimeSolv/your PMS/DMS]).

7. Verification and Professional Judgment

All AI-generated content must be reviewed, edited, and approved by a lawyer or appropriate staff member before being shared externally.

All case citations, statutes, and legal propositions suggested by AI must be independently verified using trusted legal research tools.

If AI output appears unusual, incomplete, or overly confident, it must be treated with skepticism and verified before use.

8. Training and Questions

The firm will provide periodic training on safe and effective AI use. Questions about this policy or whether a particular use of AI is appropriate should be directed to [Designated Partner/General Counsel/Tech Committee] before proceeding.

Work Faster Without Compromising Security or Control

Bringing AI into your practice doesn't have to mean all-or-nothing adoption. ChatGPT and similar tools can absolutely help you move faster on routine work, organize information, and get past the blank page, as long as you use them inside clear guardrails.

When you pair practical use cases with a simple firmwide policy, you get the benefits of AI without gambling on accuracy, bias, or confidentiality.

Make the most of AI by pairing it with tools that streamline the rest of your workflow. TimeSolv features keep data protected and simplify key processes:

- [Effortless time tracking](#) from any device
- Secure document management and automation
- Legal CRM to keep leads and clients engaged
- [Simplified billing and invoicing](#) with flexible templates

  If you want the efficiency of AI with the safety and security your clients expect, put TimeSolv at the center of your practice. [Start a free trial now](#) or [request a personalized demo today](#).

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