AI SCHEMATA

A SIMPLE PLACE TO BEGIN

# AI Basics

## A Quick Guide to Understanding Artificial Intelligence

Clarity before complexity.



Technology with Purpose.

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

# AI Basics

A Quick Guide to Understanding Artificial Intelligence

© 2026 AI Schemata. All rights reserved.

First published October 2, 2026.

This guide is provided for educational and informational purposes only. It offers a general introduction to artificial intelligence and does not constitute legal, financial, medical, cybersecurity, or other professional advice.

No portion of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission from AI Schemata, except for brief quotations used for educational or review purposes.

**AI Schemata**

Technology with Purpose.

aischemata.com

UNDERSTAND THE BASICS

# What is artificial intelligence?

Artificial intelligence, or AI, is technology that enables computers to perform tasks such as recognizing patterns, understanding language, and making predictions.

AI systems process information and use patterns learned from examples to produce responses or recommendations. People create these systems, choose where to use them, and decide what to do with their output.

## How is it different from a traditional program?

A traditional program usually follows rules written for a task: “If this happens, do that.” An AI system can learn patterns from examples and apply them to new information. Many tools combine both approaches.

## An everyday analogy

Think of sorting your mail. A traditional rule might send every message from one address to a folder. An AI-based filter can learn clues from many unwanted messages and flag a new one, even if the sender is unfamiliar. It can still get the decision wrong.

> **Simply put:**
> AI helps computers perform certain tasks that normally require aspects of human intelligence.

AI is a tool created and directed by people. Its usefulness depends on how it is designed, what information it uses, and how people apply it.

RECOGNIZE THE FAMILIAR

# You are probably already using AI

AI is already woven into everyday tools. You do not need to understand its inner workings to recognize where it can be useful.

### At home and on your phone

Smartphone assistants respond to requests. Predictive text suggests words, autocorrect fixes likely errors, and photo tools can group similar faces or objects.

### On the move

Navigation apps use patterns in traffic data to estimate travel times and suggest routes.

### When you browse or shop

Streaming services recommend shows or music. Shopping sites suggest products, and social platforms recommend posts.

### Behind the scenes

Email services filter spam. Banks flag unusual transactions for possible fraud. Some customer-service chat systems help answer routine questions.

AI has been used for many years. Modern generative AI is a newer development that lets more people ask questions and create content through direct conversation.

> AI did not suddenly appear overnight. What changed is how directly everyday people can now interact with it.

MEET CONVERSATIONAL AI

# Generative AI: what changed?

Generative AI creates new content in response to a request. Tools such as ChatGPT let you interact with AI in everyday language.

Depending on the tool and its available features, you can draft written content, generate images, brainstorm ideas, create plans, summarize material, explain concepts, or analyze information. AI can also assist with research, but you should check its claims and sources.

A conversational AI assistant lets you ask a question, read the response, and follow up. You might request a simpler explanation, add a detail, or ask for another approach. The exchange can feel natural, but the system can still misunderstand you.

## What is a prompt?

A prompt is simply the instruction, question, information, or request you give an AI system.

> **Basic prompt:**
> “Help me write an email.”

> **Better prompt:**
> “Write a warm but professional email thanking a client for meeting with me today. Keep it under 150 words.”

The second prompt gives the AI a purpose, an audience, a tone, and a length. Relevant context helps it produce a response that better fits your needs. Review the draft before sending it.

KNOW THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITS

# What AI can and cannot do

AI can be useful without being dependable in every situation. Knowing its strengths and limits helps you use it with confidence.

## AI can help you:

- Brainstorm ideas
- Organize information
- Draft communications
- Summarize material
- Explain difficult concepts
- Create plans
- Analyze information
- Improve productivity
- Explore alternatives
- Learn new skills

## AI cannot reliably:

- Know everything
- Guarantee every answer is correct
- Replace human judgment
- Understand every situation perfectly
- Make ethical decisions for you
- Know information you have not provided or that it cannot access
- Automatically determine whether information is true

AI can give an incorrect answer in a confident, polished way. It may invent a detail, a quotation, or a source. Clear wording is not proof of accuracy. Check important information against reliable sources.

> Use AI as a thinking partner - not as an unquestioned authority.

MAKE YOUR REQUEST CLEAR

# How to get better results from AI

You do not need complicated “magic words.” A clear request with a few useful details is a strong starting point.

## Tell AI:

01 **What you want** Describe the task.

02 **Why you need it** Give relevant context.

03 **Who it is for** Identify the audience.

04 **How you want it presented** Specify tone, length, format, or style.

05 **What should be avoided** Give boundaries or restrictions when necessary.

> **Weak prompt:**
> “Help me plan a meeting.”

> **Strong prompt:**
> “Create a 30-minute agenda for my small-business team’s weekly meeting. We need to review progress and agree on next steps. Use a friendly, professional tone and a table with time, topic, and goal. Avoid jargon and do not invent project details.”

The best AI conversations often develop through follow-up questions. You do not have to get the perfect prompt on the first try.

Try: “Make it shorter,” “Explain that more simply,” or “What information would help you improve this?”

KEEP HUMAN JUDGMENT AT THE CENTER

# Using AI responsibly

Responsible use begins with a simple habit: pause, review, and decide before acting on an AI response.

## Protect information

Do not enter passwords, confidential business details, personal records, or sensitive client information into a tool unless you are authorized and its privacy and security protections are appropriate. Use fictional examples when practicing.

## Check and review

Verify important facts, numbers, quotations, and sources. Read AI-generated work before sharing or publishing it. Look for mistakes, missing context, and unfair assumptions.

## Follow the rules that apply

Follow workplace AI policies. Check a tool’s privacy settings and data practices. Consider security, copyright, permission to use source material, and whether your use could mislead or harm someone.

## Keep people in the decision

Be especially careful when a decision could significantly affect another person, such as a health, financial, employment, or public-safety decision. Use qualified review and human judgment. AI systems can make mistakes.

> AI should enhance human judgment - not eliminate it.

The person using AI remains responsible for how the information is interpreted and used.

WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?

# Start Small. Stay Curious.

Becoming comfortable with AI does not require becoming a programmer or technology expert. Begin with one useful task and build from there.

- Ask AI questions about an everyday topic.
- Experiment with a simple task, such as drafting a thank-you note.
- Practice writing prompts with clear context.
- Compare responses and ask for another approach.
- Verify information before relying on it.
- Gradually explore more advanced applications.

> Try this today: “Explain a topic I am curious about in plain language. Give me one everyday example and suggest a question I could ask next.”

AI Schemata helps individuals, professionals, small businesses, and public-safety organizations understand and use artificial intelligence with greater clarity, confidence, and purpose.

## Technology with Purpose.

### Ready to go beyond the basics?

Explore Personal AI Coaching, Business Consulting, AI Training and Workshops, Public Safety Consulting, and AI Schemata Society.

Website: aischemata.com