



HOW AI REALLY WORKS

Which AI should you actually use? (an honest 2026 guide, no affiliates)

No affiliate links, no kickbacks — just an honest view of which kind of AI tool fits which job in 2026, and where to keep a human firmly in the loop.

For anyone who wants to understand

 Shipped — measured, gate-clean

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05 Sources, glossary & the honesty ledger

Every claim carries its tier · nothing faked

PREPARED

25 June 2026

VERIFIED BY

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15 years building safety-critical AI

HOW TO READ IT

Drafted with AI, verified by a
named human. Sources at the back.

01 The short version



First, the honest part: **we earn nothing from any tool we mention.** No affiliate links, no referral fees, no sponsored placements. That's the whole reason a guide like this is worth reading — most aren't written that way.

Second, the useful part: the "best AI" is the wrong question. The right question is "*best for what?*" Below is how to match the kind of tool to the job, and — just as important — where to keep a human in charge.

A note on names and prices

We're deliberately not printing a table of specific products and prices. Those change month to month, and a guide that names "the winner" is out of date by the time you read it. What doesn't change is which *kind* of tool fits which job — so that's what we'll give you. This page is a living document; check the date at the top.

02 Match the tool to the job



General chatbots — the everyday all-rounder

The well-known chat assistants are the right starting point for most people. They draft, explain, summarise, brainstorm and answer everyday questions well. If you only try one thing, try one of these — most have a capable free tier.

Drafting, explaining, brainstorming, first drafts

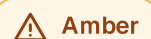
Reliable and genuinely useful when you edit and approve the output.



as of June 2026

Facts, figures, and anything you'll act on unchecked

Often right, sometimes confidently wrong. Verify anything that matters.



as of June 2026

Search-style AI — when you need current, sourced answers

Some tools are built to search the live web and show you their sources. These are better than a plain chatbot when you need something *current* and *checkable* — because you can click through and confirm. Prefer these when the answer's accuracy matters and you want to see where it came from.

Image and audio tools — creative, with a consent caveat

Tools that generate pictures or voices are fun and useful for mock-ups and drafts. Two honest cautions: don't create images or voices of real people without consent, and assume anything you make may be recognisably "AI".

Mock-ups, drafts, illustrations, ideas Great for non-final creative work.	✓ Go as of June 2026
Cloning a real person's face or voice Consent and legal issues — and it's the same tech scammers misuse.	! Stop as of June 2026

Specialist and "built-in" AI

A lot of software you already pay for now has AI baked in — your email, your office suite, your accounting tool. This is often the easiest, safest place to start, because your data stays inside a tool you already trust. Before buying a separate AI product, check whether something you own already does the job.

	DRAFT / EXPLAIN	FACTS TO ACT ON	CURRENT & SOURCED	CREATIVE
General chatbot	●	◐	○	◐
Search-style AI	●	◐	●	○
Image / audio tools	○	○	○	●
Specialist / built-in	◐	◐	◐	◐

● Go ◐ Check it ○ Keep a human

Match the *KIND* of tool to the job — not the brand (brands and prices change monthly; this doesn't). Where a cell is amber or red, keep a human firmly in the loop.

03 How to choose, in practice



Start with a free tier of a well-known general chatbot. Learn the feel of it on low-stakes tasks.

Add a search-style tool when you need current, sourced answers.

Check what's already built into the software you pay for before buying anything new.

Keep a human approving anything a customer, a regulator, or your bank balance will see.

Does it need to be current & checkable?	Yes → A search-style AI that shows sources	No → A general chatbot is fine
Will you act on it unchecked?	Yes → Stop — verify at the source first	No → Draft freely, then edit
Is personal or sensitive data involved?	Yes → Use controlled tooling; read the terms	No → A free public tier is OK

A three-question route to the right tool — and to where a human must stay.

04 The rule that matters more than the brand

Whichever tool you pick, the safe pattern is the same one throughout our guides: **AI drafts, a person decides**. Get that right and the specific brand matters far less than the salespeople would like you to believe.

If you'd like a recommendation tailored to your actual situation — your job, your budget, your appetite for risk — the free scorecard below is the honest next step. It won't try to sell you the most expensive option. That's rather the point.

05 Sources, glossary & the ledger

Where every claim comes from — and what the plain words mean.

Sources

- 01 **Guidance on using generative AI safely** — UK National Cyber Security Centre (as of June 2026)
<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/>

THE HONESTY LEDGER

- Shipped — measured, gate-clean.
- 🔬 Research — measured, partial; the gap is shown.
- 🔭 Vision — designed, honest; not yet built.

The bigger claim goes up a tier, never down. We show the eval beside the demo — the tiering is the credibility.

Get a recommendation for your situation

The right tool depends on your job, your budget and your risk. The free readiness scorecard gives you tailored next steps in five minutes.

</diagnose/quiz>

Nothing faked.

Drafted with AI and verified by a named human. A clear explanation you can act on — the mechanism in plain English, the limits marked.

Vocabotics · calm, clear, candid · no client names · global rail & metro heritage

