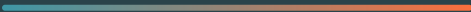


AI FOR EVERYONE

AI for Complete Beginners

The calm, no-jargon on-ramp: what AI is, what it isn't, the three things to try first, and the three things to be careful of. Plain English, honest, no hype.


For everyone Shipped – measured, gate-clean

COVER: A CALM DAWN · A WARM, HUMAN ILLUSTRATION

AI for Complete Beginners

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Every claim carries its tier · nothing faked

PREPARED

30 June 2026

VERIFIED BY

Jon Ross — Founder, Vocabotics —
15 years building safety-critical AI

HOW TO READ IT

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

01 Start here



If the word "AI" makes you feel a step behind, breathe out. This is the gentle start — no jargon, no assumptions, no pressure. In ten minutes you'll understand what AI actually is, what it isn't, the few things worth trying, and the few things to be careful of. That's genuinely all you need to begin.

The whole thing in one sentence.

For everyday purposes, "AI" means a program you talk to in plain language — you type a question or a request, and it types back a helpful answer. That's it. Everything else is detail.

02 What AI actually is



The tools everyone means when they say "AI" — ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini — are *chat assistants*. Picture a very well-read helper who has read an enormous amount of writing and, because of that, is very good at guessing which words should come next. That "guessing words" trick is what lets it write emails, explain ideas, summarise long documents, and answer questions in a natural, conversational way.

You use it in a web browser or a phone app. There's a free version of each, so you can learn what it does without paying anything. You talk to it exactly as you'd talk to a helpful person at a desk — no special commands, no code.

What AI is

- A tool you talk to in plain words
- A fast writer, summariser, explainer
- Something you check and approve

VS

What AI is NOT

- A truth machine
- Connected to your bank or accounts
- A replacement for your judgement

The plainest possible picture: what these tools are, and what they are not.

03 What AI is NOT



Just as important, and rarely said plainly:

It is not a person. It doesn't know you, doesn't understand the way you do, and doesn't truly *care* about anything. It predicts helpful text.

It is not always right. Because it's guessing words, it can produce a confident answer that's simply wrong — a made-up fact, a wrong date, an invented quote. This has a nickname: a "hallucination." It looks exactly as sure when it's wrong as when it's right.

It is not a search engine, a bank, a doctor or a lawyer. It's a helper for words and thinking — not a source of truth for decisions that matter.

It is not magic, and it is not coming for you. Ignore both the breathless hype and the doom. It's a useful tool with real limits. That's the honest middle.

The mental model to keep

Think of AI as a fast, tireless, well-read assistant who is *sometimes confidently wrong*. Brilliant for a first draft or an explanation. Never to be trusted blindly on a fact that matters. Hold those two thoughts together and you'll use it well.

04 The three things to try first



Don't overthink your first go. Try these, in order — each is genuinely useful and completely low-risk:

Explain something confusing. Paste in (or type out) a baffling letter, form or term and ask: "*Explain this in plain English, and tell me if I need to do anything.*" This is the moment most people think, "oh — I get it now."

Draft something you've been putting off. "*Write a short, polite email asking my landlord to fix a leaking tap. Keep it friendly and under 100 words.*" You'll get a solid first draft to tweak and send.

Ask a low-stakes question and follow up. "*Suggest three easy dinners using chicken and rice*" — then "*make the first one spicier.*" That back-and-forth is the entire skill, and now you've done it.

You can't break it.

There's no wrong question and nothing to damage. A poor answer just means you ask again, or say "shorter," "simpler," or "you got that wrong." You're in charge of the conversation the whole time.

**Draft something**

an email, a note, a message

**Explain something**

a letter or a word you don't know

**Summarise something**

a long page into the point

Three safe first tries — no downside if the wording is rough.

05 The three things to be careful of



Being careful here isn't about fear — it's about a few simple habits that keep you safe and out of trouble.

Check anything that matters. Never act on a fact, figure, date or piece of advice about your health, money or legal life without confirming it with a real, trusted source — a professional, an official website, a person you trust. Use AI to *understand* and to prepare questions; let a human confirm the answer.

Guard your private details. Anything you type goes to the company that runs the tool. So never enter passwords, PINs, full bank or card details, or other people's private information. Ask general questions freely; keep the private specifics to yourself.

Watch for AI-powered scams. Scammers now use AI to write flawless messages and even clone voices. The old advice ("look for bad spelling") no longer works; the rule that still does is to be suspicious of anything that rushes you, wants money moved a new way, or stops you checking. When in doubt, hang up and call back on a number you already trust.

Handle AI tools with the same care as anything online: don't put in sensitive personal or financial information, and check important outputs before you rely on them.

Using AI safely — guidance · UK National Cyber Security Centre · as of June 2026

You have rights and protections over your personal information — think before sharing it with any online service, AI included.

Guidance for the public (data protection) · UK Information Commissioner's Office · as of June 2026

06 What to do next



That's the on-ramp. You now know more than most people who use these tools daily. The single best next step is simply to *try one* — pick ChatGPT, Claude or Gemini, open the free version, and ask it to

explain a confusing letter. Our step-by-step beginner's guides walk you through it gently, one screen at a time.

07 The honest bottom line



A I is a friendly, fast helper for words and thinking — not a person, not an oracle, and not a threat. Try it on the low-stakes things first, keep your private details to yourself, and check anything that matters with a real human. Do that, and you've got all the confidence you need to begin — calmly, at your own pace, on your own terms.

08 Sources, glossary & the ledger

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

Sources

- 01 Using AI safely — guidance** — UK National Cyber Security Centre (as of June 2026)
<https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/collection/using-ai-safely>
- 02 Guidance for the public (data protection)** — UK Information Commissioner's Office (as of June 2026)
<https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/>

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.

Read the Beginner's Guide to ChatGPT

Ready to actually try one? This walks you through ChatGPT step by step — or read the Claude guide beside it. Same calm, no hype either way.

</guides/beginners-guide-to-chatgpt>

Nothing faked.

Drafted with AI and verified by a named human. No jargon, no selling, no affiliate links — just what is honestly true about AI for an ordinary person.

