

What is AI?

Artificial intelligence (AI) doesn't have just one definition, but a simple way to think about it is this: AI is a system that does tasks we usually think need human intelligence.

Machine learning is a big part of AI. It's a technique that lets a system learn and improve on its own by using data. For example, machine learning can help a system make predictions, decisions, or even create content without being told exactly what to do.

Most AI systems today use machine learning, so the two terms are often used together, but they aren't exactly the same.

Within machine learning, there are different methods. One you might hear about is neural networks. These are inspired by how our brains work, using connected "neurons". When these networks get more complex, they are part of something called deep learning.

Deep learning uses a lot of data and computing power. It's behind many well-known AI tools like ChatGPT. Some of these tools create new things, like text, pictures or code, these are called Generative AI.

Where do we interact with AI?

Even though people have been talking a lot about AI (Artificial Intelligence) in the last few years, we've actually been using AI tools for a long time.

You probably use AI every day without even realising it. Here are some examples:

- Unlocking your smartphone with your face
- Talking to your phone to send a message
- Getting word suggestions when you type
- Searching for things on the internet
- Seeing recommended posts and videos on social media
- Getting suggestions for movies, music, or products on Netflix, Spotify, or Amazon
- Using digital helpers like Alexa, Siri, or Google Assistant

Where does Generative AI fit in?

AI (Artificial Intelligence) has become such a big part of our lives that it's now something we use every day without even thinking about it. Some people call this the age of 'everyday AI' because it's just part of our normal routines.

But even though AI is everywhere, it's also known as a 'disruptive technology.' This means it can change how we do things in a big way, sometimes even changing entire industries and how we live our lives.

Right now, most of our focus is on generative AI. This type of AI can create new content, like writing, art, or music. Over the past few years, this technology has gotten a lot better, and companies have made it easy for anyone to use.

When OpenAI released ChatGPT at the end of 2022 suddenly, almost anyone could use generative AI just by chatting with it. Now, two years later, many other companies are making similar tools that can create all sorts of content. We're also seeing generative AI being added to create new features in apps we already use, like the 'My AI' chatbot in Snapchat.

Even though generative AI is exciting, it's also making people think about some important questions. People are starting to wonder how they want to use this technology, what they want it to do for them, and what they don't want it to do at all.

To make good decisions about AI and how it fits into our lives, we need to learn more about it—like what it can do, how it can help us, and what its limits are. As AI becomes more common, understanding it will be a valuable skill to have.

“Gen AI and other recent trends affecting the labour market point to the importance of upskilling, reskilling, and training to empower the global workforce.”

McKinsey Podcast, September 21, 2023

Key points:

- AI is a term which describes a wide range of types of tools and systems
- We can be confident, responsible users of AI tools without being AI experts
- A lot of current discussions are around generative AI tools because they have impressive capabilities and are easy to access