

AI Terms You Should Know

A Plain-Language Glossary of 50 Key Artificial Intelligence Terms

Compiled by Howie Baum | Updated June 2026

This glossary defines 50 of the most commonly used terms in Artificial Intelligence, in plain English — no technical background required. Terms are listed alphabetically. Use this as a reference guide during or after any AI presentation.

TERM	PLAIN-LANGUAGE DEFINITION
Algorithm	A set of step-by-step instructions a computer follows to solve a problem or complete a task. All AI systems run on algorithms.
Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)	A hypothetical future AI that can perform any intellectual task a human can. We do not have AGI yet — today's AI is specialized, not general.
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Computer systems designed to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as understanding language, recognizing images, or making decisions.
Augmented Reality (AR)	Technology that overlays digital information — text, images, or graphics — onto the real world as seen through a phone or special glasses. Different from Virtual Reality.
Autonomous Vehicle	A self-driving car or truck that uses AI, sensors, and cameras to navigate without a human driver. Examples include Tesla Autopilot and Waymo.
Bias (AI Bias)	When an AI system produces unfair or skewed results because the data it was trained on reflected existing human prejudices or was unrepresentative of certain groups.
Big Data	Extremely large collections of data — too large for traditional software to handle — that AI systems analyze to find patterns, trends, and insights.
Chatbot	A computer program you can have a typed or spoken conversation with. It responds in natural language. Examples: ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Alexa, Siri.
Claude	An AI assistant made by Anthropic. Known for being helpful, thoughtful, and safety-focused. Available at claude.ai . One of the leading AI chatbots.
Computer Vision	The ability of AI to interpret and understand images and video — recognizing faces, reading text in photos, detecting objects, or identifying medical conditions in scans.
Copilot	Microsoft's AI assistant, built into Windows, Office, and Bing. Powered by the same technology as ChatGPT (OpenAI's models).
Data	Raw information — numbers, text, images, audio — that AI systems learn from and process. The quality and quantity of data greatly affects AI performance.

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Deep Learning	A type of machine learning that uses multi-layered neural networks to recognize complex patterns. Powers voice recognition, image generation, and language understanding.
DeepFake	AI-generated video or audio that realistically shows a real person saying or doing something they never actually did. A growing concern for misinformation.
Digital Twin	A virtual replica of a real-world object, system, or process. AI analyzes the digital twin to predict problems or test changes before applying them in the real world.
Ethics (AI Ethics)	The study of the moral questions surrounding AI — including fairness, privacy, accountability, and what decisions machines should or should not make.
Facial Recognition	AI technology that identifies a person by analyzing the unique features of their face. Used in phones, airports, and law enforcement — and raising privacy concerns.
Generative AI	AI that creates new content — text, images, music, video, or code — rather than just analyzing existing content. ChatGPT, DALL-E, and Sora are generative AI tools.
Gemini	Google's family of AI models and chatbot, available at gemini.google.com . Competes with ChatGPT and Claude. Previously called Bard.
GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer)	The underlying technology behind ChatGPT, built by OpenAI. GPT models learn from vast amounts of text to generate human-like responses. GPT-4 is a recent version.
Guardrails	Rules and restrictions built into an AI system to prevent it from producing harmful, false, or inappropriate responses. Sometimes called safety filters or alignment constraints.
Hallucination	When an AI confidently states something that is false or made up. AI systems do not know what they do not know — always verify important facts from AI output.
Image Generation	AI that creates original images from a text description. Tools include DALL-E (OpenAI), Midjourney, and Adobe Firefly. Type a sentence, get a picture.
Large Language Model (LLM)	The type of AI that powers chatbots like ChatGPT and Claude. Trained on billions of words, it learns to predict and generate human-like text.
Machine Learning (ML)	A branch of AI where systems learn from data and improve over time without being explicitly reprogrammed for every new situation.
Meta AI	Artificial intelligence tools and research from Meta (the company behind Facebook and Instagram). Their open-source model, Llama, is widely used by developers.
Model	The trained AI system itself — the 'engine' behind a chatbot or AI tool. ChatGPT is a chatbot; GPT-4 is the model running underneath it.

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Natural Language Processing (NLP)	The branch of AI that enables computers to understand, interpret, and generate human language — spoken or written.
Neural Network	An AI architecture loosely inspired by the human brain, made of layers of connected nodes that process and pass information to recognize patterns.
OpenAI	The company that created ChatGPT and the GPT series of models. One of the most prominent AI organizations in the world, founded in 2015.
Optimization	The process by which an AI system improves itself by adjusting its internal settings to produce more accurate or useful results during training.
Parameters	The millions or billions of internal numerical values in an AI model that are adjusted during training. More parameters generally means a more capable — and expensive — model.
Prompt	The question, instruction, or text you type into an AI tool to get a response. Writing clear, specific prompts leads to better AI output.
Prompt Engineering	The skill of crafting effective prompts to get the best results from an AI tool. A good prompt is clear, specific, and provides useful context.
RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation)	A technique where an AI looks up current or specific information from a database before generating its response, reducing hallucinations and improving accuracy.
Reinforcement Learning	A training method where AI learns by trial and error — receiving rewards for correct actions and penalties for wrong ones, similar to how animals learn.
Responsible AI	A framework for developing and using AI in ways that are ethical, transparent, fair, and accountable. Increasingly required by governments and corporations.
Robot	A physical machine that can carry out tasks automatically. Some robots use AI to perceive their environment and make decisions; others run on simpler fixed programs.
Safety (AI Safety)	Research and practices aimed at ensuring AI systems behave as intended, do not cause unintended harm, and remain under meaningful human oversight and control.
Siri	Apple's AI voice assistant, built into iPhones, iPads, and Macs. Answers questions, sets reminders, plays music, and controls device functions by voice command.
Sora	OpenAI's AI tool that generates realistic videos from text descriptions. Represents a new frontier in AI-generated media.
Superintelligence	A hypothetical future AI that surpasses human intelligence in every domain. Discussed heavily in AI safety research. Does not exist today.

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Token	The basic unit of text that AI language models process — roughly a word or part of a word. AI models have limits on how many tokens they can handle in one session.
Training Data	The large collection of text, images, or other content that an AI model learns from before it is released to the public. The quality of training data shapes AI behavior.
Transformer	The underlying architecture that powers most modern language AI, introduced in 2017. It enables AI to understand context and relationships across long passages of text.
Turing Test	A classic test proposed by mathematician Alan Turing in 1950: if a machine can carry on a conversation indistinguishable from a human, it passes the test.
Virtual Assistant	An AI-powered software agent that helps users with tasks using voice or text — like Siri, Alexa, Google Assistant, and Cortana.
Virtual Reality (VR)	An immersive digital environment experienced through a headset that replaces your view of the real world entirely. AI is increasingly used to create and enhance VR experiences.
Voice Recognition	AI that can identify and interpret spoken words, converting them to text or commands. Powers Siri, Alexa, and dictation features on phones and computers.
xAI / Grok	xAI is Elon Musk's AI company. Grok is its chatbot, integrated into the X platform (formerly Twitter). Has faced controversy over safety guardrails and content moderation.

Note: AI technology evolves rapidly. Definitions and examples in this guide reflect the state of AI as of June 2026. Some tools and models referenced here may have been updated or replaced since publication.