

AI GLOSSARY

100 Essential AI Terms Explained in Plain English

A practical glossary for professionals, builders and curious minds.



Discover AI. Work Smarter. Earn Smarter. Live Better.

FREE RESOURCE | AI TRENDING WORLD

How to use this glossary

Use it as a reference, onboarding guide or vocabulary map. Do not try to memorize everything at once.

FAST START

If you are new to AI, learn these first: AI, model, prompt, LLM, token, context window, hallucination, agent, RAG and human-in-the-loop.

Foundation

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Computer systems performing tasks associated with human intelligence, such as language, perception, prediction, planning or decision support.
2. Machine Learning (ML)	Methods that learn patterns from data so a system can make predictions or decisions without every rule being hand-coded.
3. Deep Learning	Machine learning using multi-layer neural networks, especially useful for language, images, audio and complex pattern recognition.
4. Neural Network	A computational model made of connected layers that transform inputs into outputs by learning numerical weights.
5. Model	A trained mathematical system that maps inputs to outputs, such as predicting, classifying or generating content.
6. Training	The process of adjusting a model's parameters using examples so it learns useful patterns.
7. Inference	Using a trained model to produce an answer, prediction, classification or action on new input.
8. Dataset	A collection of examples used for training, evaluating or operating an AI system.
9. Parameter	A learned numerical value inside a model. Large models can contain billions of parameters.
10. Benchmark	A standardized test used to compare model performance on selected tasks.

Generative AI

11. Generative AI	AI designed to create new text, images, audio, video, code or other content from learned patterns.
12. Large Language Model (LLM)	A language model trained on large text corpora to predict and generate sequences of tokens.
13. Foundation Model	A broadly trained model that can be adapted to many downstream tasks.

14. Multimodal AI	AI that can work across more than one modality, such as text, image, audio and video.
15. Token	A unit of text processed by language models; a token may be a whole word, part of a word or punctuation.
16. Context Window	The amount of information a model can consider in one interaction or working context.
17. Prompt	Instructions or input given to an AI system.
18. Prompt Engineering	Designing prompts and context to produce more reliable, useful and controllable outputs.
19. System Prompt	Higher-priority instructions that define an assistant's role, constraints or behavior.
20. Temperature	A generation control associated with randomness or variation; implementation differs across products.

Agents & Automation

21. AI Agent	A system that can pursue a goal through multiple steps, often using tools, memory, planning and feedback.
22. Agentic AI	AI behavior characterized by multi-step action, tool use and goal-directed execution rather than a single response.
23. Tool Use	An AI system calling external functions, software, search, code execution or APIs to complete work.
24. Function Calling	A structured way for a model to request that software execute a defined function.
25. Workflow	A repeatable sequence of tasks, decisions and handoffs used to produce an outcome.
26. Automation	Using software to perform recurring tasks with reduced manual intervention.
27. Orchestration	Coordinating multiple tools, models, agents or workflow steps.
28. Human-in-the-Loop	A design where a person reviews, approves, corrects or directs AI at important stages.
29. Autonomy	The degree to which an AI system can act without human intervention.
30. Guardrail	A rule, control or validation mechanism intended to constrain unsafe, incorrect or unwanted behavior.

Search, Retrieval & Knowledge

31. Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG)	A method that retrieves relevant source material and supplies it to a generative model before it answers.
32. Embedding	A numeric representation of content designed so semantically similar items are close in vector space.
33. Vector Database	A database optimized to store and search embeddings by similarity.
34. Semantic Search	Search based on meaning and context rather than exact keyword matching alone.
35. Knowledge Base	An organized collection of information used for reference, retrieval or support.
36. Grounding	Connecting an AI response to specific data, documents, tools or other verifiable context.
37. Citation	A reference showing the source used to support a statement or result.
38. Web Search	Retrieving current information from the internet as part of an AI workflow.
39. Indexing	Preparing content so it can be searched or retrieved efficiently.
40. Chunking	Breaking long content into smaller units for processing, retrieval or model context.

Quality & Risk

41. Hallucination	An AI-generated statement that sounds plausible but is unsupported, incorrect or fabricated.
42. Accuracy	How often outputs are correct according to a defined standard or ground truth.
43. Reliability	How consistently a system performs acceptably across repeated or varied situations.
44. Evaluation (Eval)	A structured test used to measure model or workflow quality against criteria.
45. Bias	Systematic patterns in data, models or decisions that can produce uneven or distorted outcomes.
46. Drift	Change over time in data, behavior or performance that can reduce system effectiveness.
47. Explainability	The degree to which people can understand why a system produced an output or decision.
48. Safety	Practices designed to reduce harmful, insecure or unintended AI behavior.

49. Privacy	Protection of personal or confidential information throughout AI use.
50. Data Governance	Policies and controls governing how data is collected, accessed, stored, used and deleted.

Work & Productivity

51. Copilot	An AI assistant designed to support a person while they perform work rather than operate independently.
52. Summarization	Compressing information into a shorter representation while preserving the most important points.
53. Extraction	Pulling specific fields, facts, entities or structured information from unstructured content.
54. Classification	Assigning an input to one or more categories.
55. Transcription	Converting spoken audio into text.
56. Translation	Converting content from one language to another.
57. Content Repurposing	Transforming one content asset into multiple formats or channels.
58. Decision Support	Using analysis or AI output to inform a human decision rather than make it automatically.
59. Productivity Workflow	A repeatable AI-assisted process that saves time, improves consistency or reduces repetitive work.
60. Knowledge Work	Professional work centered on information, reasoning, communication, analysis or creation.

Building & Development

61. API	An application programming interface that lets software systems exchange data or request actions.
62. SDK	A software development kit containing tools and libraries for building with a platform.
63. Fine-Tuning	Further training a model on targeted examples to adapt behavior to a narrower task or style.
64. Zero-Shot	Asking a model to perform a task without showing task-specific examples first.
65. Few-Shot	Providing a small number of examples in the prompt to guide model behavior.
66. Structured Output	A response constrained to a defined format such as JSON, fields or schema.

67. Model Routing	Selecting different models for different tasks based on cost, speed, capability or risk.
68. Latency	The time between sending a request and receiving a result.
69. Throughput	How much work a system can process in a given period.
70. Cost per Task	The total cost associated with completing a workflow, including model, tool and human-review costs.

Business & Strategy

71. AI Use Case	A specific problem or workflow where AI is applied to produce a measurable outcome.
72. AI Readiness	The degree to which an organization has suitable data, processes, skills and governance to use AI effectively.
73. Proof of Concept (POC)	A small test built to determine whether an idea works technically or operationally.
74. Pilot	A limited real-world deployment used to validate value, process and risk before scaling.
75. ROI	Return on investment: value created relative to the cost of implementing and operating a solution.
76. Value Proposition	A clear explanation of the outcome a customer receives and why it matters.
77. AI Service	A service business where AI helps produce, accelerate or improve a client deliverable.
78. Productization	Turning a custom service or expertise into a standardized, repeatable offer.
79. Automation Opportunity	A recurring task or process that may benefit from software or AI-assisted execution.
80. AI Governance	The policies, roles, controls and review processes used to manage AI responsibly.

Data & Models

81. Supervised Learning	Learning from examples that include desired labels or outputs.
82. Unsupervised Learning	Finding patterns or structure in data without labeled target outputs.
83. Reinforcement Learning	Learning behavior from rewards or feedback based on actions and outcomes.

84. Synthetic Data	Artificially generated data used for training, testing, simulation or privacy-preserving workflows.
85. Label	The target category or answer attached to a training example.
86. Feature	An input variable or signal used by a predictive model.
87. Classification Model	A model that predicts categories.
88. Regression Model	A model that predicts a continuous numerical value.
89. Computer Vision	AI methods for understanding images and video.
90. Speech Recognition	AI methods that identify or transcribe spoken language.

Modern AI Operations

91. Model Context Protocol (MCP)	A protocol pattern for connecting AI systems to tools and external context through standardized interfaces.
92. Connector	An integration that lets an AI product access a specific external service, dataset or application.
93. Memory	Stored information an AI system can reuse across interactions, subject to product design and privacy controls.
94. Observability	Monitoring logs, traces, metrics and outcomes to understand how an AI system behaves.
95. Prompt Injection	Instructions embedded in content that attempt to manipulate an AI system into ignoring intended rules.
96. Data Leakage	Unintended exposure of sensitive, confidential or proprietary information.
97. Red Teaming	Adversarial testing intended to find weaknesses, unsafe behavior or security gaps.
98. Rate Limit	A restriction on how many requests can be made within a time period.
99. Fallback	A backup model, process or human step used when the primary route fails.
100. Escalation	Routing uncertain, sensitive or high-impact cases to a person or higher-control process.

10 terms to put into practice this week

- 1 Prompt: write one reusable prompt for a task you perform every week.
- 2 Context window: decide what information the AI really needs before you paste everything.
- 3 RAG: identify one document collection you would want an assistant to search before answering.
- 4 Agent: choose one multi-step workflow that has a clear goal and clear stopping point.
- 5 Human-in-the-loop: identify the approval point that must remain human.
- 6 Evaluation: define what a good answer looks like before you automate it.
- 7 Structured output: ask for a fixed table or JSON schema when downstream software needs the result.
- 8 Grounding: require source material for claims that matter.
- 9 Automation: automate a known process, not a process you do not yet understand.
- 10 ROI: measure time saved, error reduction, revenue impact or another meaningful outcome.

YOUR NEXT STEP

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