



**AI LIFE SKILLS ACADEMY**

# **AI for Complete Beginners**

A gentle 7-day, step-by-step guide  
to ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude

Set up safely · Ask well · Everyday writing · Paperwork

Talk & photos · Stay safe · Build the habit

Large-print edition · Checked against official help pages, October  
2026

# Welcome. You're in the right place.

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This guide is for you if any of these sound familiar:

- "Everyone talks about AI and I don't know where to start."
- "I tried it once, got a strange answer, and gave up."
- "I'm worried I'll press the wrong thing or share something I shouldn't."
- "My kids or grandkids use it, and I'd like to understand it too."
- "I'm looking for a job, and I keep hearing I should use AI."

You don't need to be "good with computers." You don't need to pay for anything. And you don't need to rush. Our mission at AI Life Skills Academy is simple: **help everyone get comfortable with AI at their own pace, with no one left behind.**

## How this guide works

There are **7 short days**. Each day takes about **15 to 30 minutes**. Each day has:

- **Today's goal:** one small thing you'll be able to do.
- **Step by step:** exactly what to tap or type.
- **Copy-and-paste messages:** ready-made words you can use. Change the parts in [square brackets] to fit you.
- **Try it now:** a small exercise to practice.
- **Common mistakes:** so you can skip them.
- **Checklist:** tick the boxes when you're done.

**"Day" doesn't have to mean "tomorrow."** Take a week, a month, or do one day twice. Going slowly is not falling behind. It's how this sticks.

## What you need

- A smartphone (iPhone or Android), a tablet, or a computer with internet.
- An email address you check. (If you use Gmail, you already have a Google account, which helps with Gemini.)
- 15 minutes and a cup of something you like.

## A promise about honesty

These apps change often. The steps in this guide were checked against each company's own help pages in **October 2026**. If a button on your screen looks a little different, that's normal. We've marked the places where things often vary. If you get stuck, the "If your screen looks different" notes will help, and you can always ask the AI itself: *"Where do I find [the setting] in this app?"*

AI Life Skills Academy is independent. We aren't connected to OpenAI (ChatGPT), Google (Gemini) or Anthropic (Claude), and nobody paid us to recommend anything.

# Before you start: a few words, explained

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You'll see these words in this guide. You don't need to memorize them. Come back here any time.

- **AI (artificial intelligence):** computer programs that can understand everyday language and write, explain or answer things back to you in everyday language.
- **Chat app / AI assistant:** an app where you type or say something and the AI answers, like a text-message conversation. ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude are the three best known.
- **App:** a program on your phone or computer. On a phone, you get apps from the **App Store** (iPhone) or the **Google Play Store** (Android).
- **Website / browser:** you can also use these tools without installing anything, by typing their web address into the program you use for the internet (Safari, Chrome, Edge or Firefox). That program is called a **browser**.
- **Account:** your sign-in, usually your email address plus a password. It lets the app remember your settings.
- **Chat:** one conversation with the AI. You can start a fresh one any time with **New chat**.
- **Prompt:** a fancy word for *the message you send to the AI*. In this guide we'll just say "message."
- **Settings:** the menu where you change how an app works. It's usually behind your name, your initials, your photo, or a little gear icon.
- **Upload / attach:** sending a photo or file to the AI so it can look at it. Usually done with a **+** (**plus**) button.
- **Free plan:** the version you don't pay for. Everything in this guide works on the free plans.

## The 3 golden rules (read these twice)

1. **Never type or say anything you wouldn't put on a postcard.** That means no passwords, no one-time codes, no full bank or card numbers, no Social Security or Medicare numbers. You never need them for anything in this guide.
2. **The AI can be wrong while sounding very sure.** Treat its answers like advice from a helpful neighbor: useful, but check anything important about money, health or the law with a real person or an official source.
3. **You are in charge.** The AI suggests; you decide. It can't send your emails or pay your bills unless you do it.

# Day 1: Pick one free app and set it up safely

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**Today's goal:** have one AI app installed, signed in, and set up with privacy settings you're comfortable with.

**Time:** about 20–30 minutes.

## Step 1: Pick just one

You'll hear about many AI tools. For this week, **pick one** and stick with it. Switching between apps is the number one thing that makes beginners feel lost. All three below are good, and all three are free to start.

|                    | ChatGPT                                    | Gemini                                | Claude                                                        |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Made by            | OpenAI                                     | Google                                | Anthropic                                                     |
| Free plan?         | Yes                                        | Yes                                   | Yes                                                           |
| Age to sign up     | 13+ (under 18 needs a parent's OK)         | 13+ for most features (some need 18+) | 18+                                                           |
| Talk out loud      | Yes (limited time on free)                 | Yes, "Gemini Live" in the phone app   | Yes, "voice mode" (counts toward your free use)               |
| Can look at photos | Yes (limited on free)                      | Yes                                   | Yes                                                           |
| Good fit if...     | you want the one most people have heard of | you use Android or Gmail already      | you're 18+ and mostly want help with writing and explanations |

**Not sure? Here's a simple way to choose:**

- **You have an Android phone or use Gmail a lot** → try **Gemini**. On many Android phones it's already there.
- **You have an iPhone or just want "the famous one"** → try **ChatGPT**.
- **A friend or family member already uses one** → pick the same one. They can help you.

You can always try another one later. The skills you learn this week work in all of them.

## Step 2: Get the real app (watch out for fakes)

App stores have look-alike apps with similar names. Some cost money or show lots of ads. Get the official one:

- **ChatGPT:** app name **ChatGPT**, made by **OpenAI**. Website: **chatgpt.com**
- **Gemini:** app name **Google Gemini** (made by **Google**). On many Android phones, Gemini is part of the Google app. Website: **gemini.google.com**
- **Claude:** app name **Claude by Anthropic**. Website: **claude.ai**

**Tip:** check the name of the company under the app's name before you tap "Get" or "Install." None of these needs a paid "AI chat" app from another company.

## Step 3: Create your free account

1. Open the app (or the website).
2. Tap **Sign up** or **Log in**.
3. Choose to sign in with your email, or with your Google or Apple account if you're offered that. (Gemini always uses a Google account.)
4. Follow the steps on screen. You may get a code by email to confirm it's you.  
**That code is for the app's own sign-in screen only.** Never give it to a person who asks for it.

5. If you're asked to pick a paid plan, look for **Free**, **Stay on free**, **Not now**, or an **X** to close the offer. You don't need to pay for anything in this guide.

**Good to know:** ChatGPT and Gemini let you try some things without signing in, but signing in lets you keep your settings and find old chats.

## Step 4: Choose your privacy settings (5 minutes)

All three companies may use your chats to improve their AI, and in some cases trained people may read a sample of chats. Each one lets you turn this off. It's your choice. Here's where to find it, checked in October 2026:

### ChatGPT: turn off "Improve the model for everyone"

- **Phone:** open the side menu (top left), tap your profile icon to open **Settings**, tap **Data controls**, and turn off **Improve the model for everyone**.
- **Computer:** click your account name or picture, then **Settings**, then **Data controls**, then turn off **Improve the model for everyone** and click **Done**.
- Turning this off does **not** delete your old chats. They stay in your list.
- Good to know: OpenAI says that if you tap thumbs-up or thumbs-down on an answer, that whole conversation may be used for training even if this is off.
- Also good to know: OpenAI says ads may appear on the free plan in some countries.

### Gemini: decide about "Keep Activity"

- On **gemini.google.com**: click **Settings & help**, then **Activity**. On the phone app, open the menu and look for **Settings & help** and **Activity**. (You can also go to **myactivity.google.com/product/gemini**.)
- When **Keep Activity** is on (it's on by default for adults), your chats are saved to your Google account and may be used to improve Google's AI, with help from human reviewers.

- **Option A, more privacy:** turn **Keep Activity** off. Google says new chats then won't be used to train its AI (unless you send feedback), but they're still kept for up to 72 hours. **The trade-off:** your chats won't stay in your list to come back to, and some features that connect to other Google apps stop working.
- **Option B, a middle path:** leave it on, but change **auto-delete** from 18 months to **3 months** on the same page. Then just follow golden rule #1 and never share private details.
- Google says chats that reviewers have already looked at are kept for up to 3 years, separate from your account, even if you delete your activity. Another reason for golden rule #1.

### **Claude: turn off "Help improve our AI models"**

- **Phone or computer:** tap your name or initials, then **Settings**, then **Privacy**. Under **Help improve our AI models**, switch it off.
- Anthropic says that after you switch it off, new chats won't be used for training. Chats flagged by its safety systems may still be reviewed.

**If your screen looks different:** look for words like **Privacy**, **Data**, **Activity** or **Improve**. Or ask the app: *"How do I stop my chats from being used to train your AI?"* Then check that the answer matches what you see.

## **Step 5: Learn the "private chat" button**

Each app has a way to have a one-off chat that doesn't stay in your list. It's handy for personal questions:

- **ChatGPT: Temporary chat.** Start a new chat and tap **Temporary**. OpenAI says it won't appear in your history, won't be used to train its models, and may be kept for up to 30 days for safety.
- **Gemini: Temporary chat.** Next to **New chat**, tap **Temporary chat** (on the phone, open the menu first). Google says it won't appear in your recent

chats or activity and isn't used to train its AI. It's kept for up to 72 hours.

- **Claude: Incognito chat.** Start a new chat (not inside a "project") and tap the **ghost icon** at the top right. Anthropic says it isn't saved to your chat history or memory and isn't used to train its models.

**Important:** "private" doesn't mean "safe to share secrets." The companies still keep these chats for a short time. Golden rule #1 still applies.

## Try it now

Open your app and send your very first message. Type or copy this:

Hi! I'm brand new to AI and a little nervous. In 3 short sentences, tell me what you can help me with in everyday life. Use simple words.

Read the answer. That's it. You've used AI.

## Common mistakes on Day 1

- **Installing three apps at once.** Pick one. You can explore later.
- **Downloading a look-alike app.** Check the company name: OpenAI, Google or Anthropic.
- **Paying because a screen asked you to.** The free plans are enough for this whole guide.
- **Worrying you'll "break" it.** You can't. If something goes wrong, start a **New chat**.

## Day 1 checklist

- ☐ I picked one app: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I installed the official app or opened the official website
- ☐ I created a free account and I know how to sign in again

- ☐ I looked at the privacy setting and made my choice
- ☐ I found the private chat button (Temporary or Incognito)
- ☐ I sent my first message

**Free practice:** if a tech word ever confuses you, use our free drill **Explain a tech term like I'm 12:** [ailifeskillsacademy.com/drills/tech-term-like-im-12.html](http://ailifeskillsacademy.com/drills/tech-term-like-im-12.html)

# Day 2: How to ask well

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**Today's goal:** learn one simple recipe that makes almost every answer better.

**Time:** about 20 minutes.

## Why the first answer is sometimes "meh"

The AI doesn't know you. If you ask "Write a birthday message," it has to guess who it's for, how close you are, and what tone you like. So it gives you something generic. The fix isn't fancy words. It's **context**: a few details about you and what you want.

## The 3-part recipe

Every good message answers three questions:

1. **Who am I?** (or who is this for)
2. **What do I need?**
3. **What does "good" look like?** (length, tone, format, things to avoid)

**Instead of:**

Write a birthday message.

**Try:**

I'm writing a birthday card for my neighbor Carol, who turns 80. We wave hello most days and she brought soup when I was sick last winter. Write 3 short options, warm but not over the top, 2 sentences each. No jokes about age.

See the difference? Same request, but now the AI has something to work with.

## Two more tricks that work in every app

**Trick 1: Ask it to ask you questions first.** When you're not sure what details matter, let the AI interview you:

I need help with [what you need]. Before you answer, ask me up to 3 questions, one at a time, so you understand my situation. Then give me your answer.

**Trick 2: Don't start over. Say what to fix.** If the answer isn't right, stay in the same chat and say what to change:

That's too long. Give me the same thing in half the words.

Make it sound more like how I'd talk. Simpler words, friendly, no fancy phrases.

Use the details I gave you. Don't give me general advice.

I don't understand the part about [phrase]. Explain it like I'm 12, with an everyday example.

## Save time: tell it about yourself once

All three apps let you write a short note about yourself that they'll remember in every chat. It's optional, but it means you won't have to repeat yourself.

- **ChatGPT: Settings**, then **Personalization** (on a computer) or **Customize ChatGPT** (on the phone). Make sure customization is on, then type in the **Custom Instructions** box. Free accounts can save up to 1,500 characters, which is plenty.

- **Gemini: Settings & help**, then **Personal Intelligence**, then **Instructions for Gemini**, then **Add +**.
- **Claude**: tap your initials, then **Settings**, then fill in **Instructions for Claude**.

Here's a note you can copy and adjust. **Don't include private details** like your address, birthday or account numbers:

I'm new to AI. Please use plain, everyday words and short paragraphs. If you use a technical word, explain it in one simple sentence. Give me step-by-step instructions with numbers. If you're not sure about something, say so instead of guessing.

**If your screen looks different:** the companies rename these menus from time to time. Look for **Personalization**, **Instructions** or **Customize**.

**About "memory":** some apps can also remember things from your past chats. That can be handy. If you'd rather it didn't, ChatGPT has **Settings → Personalization → Memory**, Claude has **Settings → Memory**, and Gemini has **Settings → Personal Intelligence → Memory** (where available). Using a private chat (from Day 1) skips memory for that conversation.

## Try it now

Pick something real from your week, like a gift, a meal, or a trip to plan. Write it using the 3-part recipe. Here's a fill-in-the-blanks version:

I'm [who you are, e.g. a retired teacher on a budget]. I need [what you need, e.g. ideas for a fun, cheap afternoon with my 7-year-old grandson]. A good answer would be [e.g. 5 ideas, under \$20 each, that work indoors if it rains, in a short list].

Then use one "fix it" message from above to make the answer even better.

## Common mistakes on Day 2

- **Asking in 4 words and giving up.** Add who, what, and what good looks like.
- **Starting a new chat every time.** Stay in the same chat and say what to fix. It remembers what you said earlier in that chat.
- **Thinking there's a "magic phrase."** There isn't. Plain, specific details beat clever wording.
- **Putting private details in your "about me" note.** Keep it to preferences, not personal data.

## Day 2 checklist

- ☐ I know the 3-part recipe: who I am, what I need, what good looks like
- ☐ I asked the AI to ask me questions first, at least once
- ☐ I fixed an answer by saying what to change (instead of starting over)
- ☐ I decided whether to add an "about me" note, and kept private details out

**Free practice:** our blog post **AI gave you a weak answer? 6 follow-ups that usually fix it:** [ailifeskillsacademy.com/blog/fix-up-prompts-when-ai-gives-weak-answer.html](https://ailifeskillsacademy.com/blog/fix-up-prompts-when-ai-gives-weak-answer.html)

# Day 3: Everyday writing: emails, letters and messages

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**Today's goal:** use AI to get a first draft of something you need to write, then make it yours.

**Time:** about 20–30 minutes.

## The big idea

AI is great at the "blank page" problem. You tell it the situation, it gives you a draft, and **you** read it, fix it and send it yourself. It can't send anything on its own here. You stay in charge.

## Copy-and-paste messages for writing

### Write an email from scratch:

Help me write a short email.

Who it's to: [e.g. my landlord, Mr. Patel]

What it's about: [e.g. the kitchen sink has been leaking for a week]

What I want to happen: [e.g. a plumber to come this week]

Tone: [polite but firm]

Keep it under 120 words. Give me a subject line too.

### Reply to an email you received:

Here's an email I got. Help me write a reply that [says yes / says no politely / asks for more time]. Keep it friendly and short.

The email (with names and personal details removed):

[paste the email here]

### **Soften something that sounds too blunt:**

Here's what I want to say, but it sounds too harsh. Rewrite it so it's kind and clear, without changing what I'm asking for. Give me 2 versions.

[paste your message]

### **A thank-you note or card:**

Write 3 short thank-you notes to [who] for [what they did]. Make them warm and personal, 2 to 3 sentences each. Mention [a detail, e.g. that the casserole lasted us three dinners].

### **A complaint or request letter:**

Help me write a polite complaint letter to [company]. What happened: [describe it in a few sentences, with dates]. What I'd like: [refund / repair / replacement / an apology]. Keep it calm, factual and under 200 words. Don't make up any details I didn't give you.

### **For job seekers: a simple cover note:**

I'm applying for [job title] at [type of company]. Here's the job listing and a few facts about my experience. Write a short, honest cover note (under 150 words). Only use the experience I list. Don't invent anything.

Job listing: [paste]

My experience: [3 to 5 short facts about you]

## **How to "make it yours" in 1 minute**

Before you send anything the AI wrote:

1. **Read it out loud.** If a sentence doesn't sound like you, change it or ask: *"Make this sound more like me: simpler and friendlier."*
2. **Check every fact.** Names, dates, amounts, addresses. The AI sometimes fills gaps with made-up details.
3. **Cut what you don't need.** Shorter is almost always better.
4. **Copy it into your email or text app and send it yourself.** To copy: press and hold on the text (phone) or highlight it (computer) and choose **Copy**. Most apps also have a small **copy** icon under each answer.

## Try it now

Think of one message you've been putting off: a thank-you, a follow-up, a reply. Use one of the messages above to draft it. Then do the 1-minute "make it yours" check. You don't have to send it today, but you can.

## Common mistakes on Day 3

- **Sending without reading.** Always read it first. You're the one who signs it.
- **Letting it invent facts.** Add "Don't make up any details I didn't give you."
- **Pasting other people's private details.** Remove phone numbers, addresses and account numbers from emails before you paste them.
- **Sounding like a robot.** Ask it to use your words and keep it short. Add one personal touch yourself.

## Day 3 checklist

- ☐ I drafted one real email, letter or message with AI
- ☐ I read it out loud and changed anything that didn't sound like me
- ☐ I checked every name, date and number
- ☐ I know how to copy text from the AI into another app

**Free practice drills: - Rewrite a blunt email:**

[ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/blunt-email.html](http://ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/blunt-email.html) - **Draft a polite follow-up**

**after silence:** [ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/polite-follow-up.html](http://ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/polite-follow-up.html) - **Soften**

**feedback without watering it down:** [ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/soften-](http://ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/soften-feedback.html)

[feedback.html](http://ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/soften-feedback.html) - **Turn a job listing into interview talking points:**

[ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/job-listing-interview-points.html](http://ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/job-listing-interview-points.html)

# Day 4: Make sense of confusing paperwork, bills and letters (safely)

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**Today's goal:** turn a confusing letter or bill into plain English, without sharing private information.

**Time:** about 20–30 minutes.

## Why this is one of the best uses of AI

Insurance letters, bills, bank notices and medical paperwork are often written in a language nobody speaks. AI is good at translating that into everyday words, pulling out deadlines, and helping you prepare questions. It is **not** a lawyer, doctor or accountant, and it can misread fine print. Think of it as a reading helper, not the final word.

## First: protect your information (always)

Before you share any letter or bill:

1. **Cover or remove private details.** Name, address, date of birth, account numbers, member or policy numbers, Social Security or Medicare numbers.
2. **Paper:** cover them with a sticky note or your thumb before taking a photo.
3. **Typed text:** copy the text, then delete those details before you send it.
4. **Use a private chat** (Temporary in ChatGPT and Gemini, Incognito in Claude) for anything personal. See Day 1.
5. **Only share what's needed.** Often one page is enough.

## How to share a letter with the AI

- **Take a photo:** tap the **+** (**plus**) button next to the typing box, choose **Camera** or **Photos**, and pick your photo. (Free plans have limits on how

many photos or files you can send. If you hit one, wait or paste the text instead.)

- **Or paste the text:** if the letter came by email or is on a website, copy the words and paste them in.

## Copy-and-paste messages for paperwork

### Explain any letter or bill:

Explain this letter in plain words. I'm not an expert.

What it is: [e.g. insurance letter / medical bill / bank notice / letter from a government office]

My worry: [e.g. "do I owe this?" / "do I have to do anything?"]

- 1) In 3 sentences: what is this, and why did I get it?
- 2) Do I need to do anything? List each action and any deadline that's written in the letter.
- 3) For each dollar amount: what it's for, and whether it says I owe it.
- 4) Explain any confusing words or codes simply.
- 5) Give me 3 questions to ask if I call them.

Only use what's in the letter. If something isn't stated, write "not stated" instead of guessing.

That last line matters. It tells the AI not to fill gaps with guesses.

### A medical letter or test result you don't understand:

I got this letter from my doctor's office / hospital. Please explain it in plain, calm language. Don't diagnose me or tell me what treatment to choose. Instead:

- 1) What does this letter say, in simple words?
- 2) What words or numbers should I ask my doctor about?
- 3) Write me 5 clear questions to bring to my next appointment.

[paste the text, with my name, date of birth and ID numbers removed]

### Check a bill for things to ask about:

Here's a bill (personal details removed). List every charge in plain words. Point out anything that looks like a repeat, an unusual fee, or something I should ask about. Don't assume anything is wrong. Just tell me what to double-check and how to ask about it politely.

[paste the bill text]

### Get ready for a phone call about it:

Help me prepare for a phone call with [the company / office] about this letter. Write a short script: how to start, my 3 questions, and how to ask them to repeat or explain things simply. Remind me to write down the person's name and the date.

### After you get the answer

1. **Check deadlines and amounts against the real letter.** The AI can misread numbers.
2. **If money, health or coverage is at stake, call the sender.** Use the phone number on their official website or the back of your card, **not** a

number from an unexpected email or text.

3. **Put any deadline on your calendar** right away.

## Try it now

Find one letter, bill or form that's been sitting on the counter. Cover the private details, then use the "Explain any letter or bill" message. Write down the one next step you'll take.

## Common mistakes on Day 4

- **Sharing the whole page with numbers showing.** Cover them first, every time.
- **Trusting the AI's numbers without checking.** Always compare with the original.
- **Using it instead of a professional.** For diagnoses, legal problems or big money decisions, use it to prepare questions, then ask a real person.
- **Calling a number from a suspicious message.** Use the number from the official website or your card.

## Day 4 checklist

- ☐ I know which details to cover or delete before sharing
- ☐ I used a private chat for something personal
- ☐ I got a plain-English explanation of one real letter or bill
- ☐ I checked any deadlines and amounts against the original
- ☐ I wrote down my one next step

**Free practice drills and guides:** - **Decode a confusing letter or bill in plain English:** [ailifskillsacademy.com/drills/confusing-letter-plain-english.html](https://ailifskillsacademy.com/drills/confusing-letter-plain-english.html) - **Build a simple budget around your paydays:** [ailifskillsacademy.com/drills/payday-budget.html](https://ailifskillsacademy.com/drills/payday-budget.html) - **Use AI to compare**

**health plans at open enrollment:** [ailifeskillsacademy.com/blog/ai-compare-health-plans-open-enrollment.html](http://ailifeskillsacademy.com/blog/ai-compare-health-plans-open-enrollment.html)

# Day 5: Talk instead of type, and use photos

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**Today's goal:** have a spoken conversation with AI, and ask it about a photo.

**Time:** about 20 minutes.

## Why this matters

If typing on a small phone keyboard is what keeps you away from AI, you can skip it. All three apps let you talk out loud and hear the answer spoken back, like a phone call. And all three can look at a photo you take and tell you about it.

## Part 1: Talk out loud

First, two quick things:

- **Find a quiet spot.** Background TV or other voices can confuse it. Headphones help.
- **Don't say anything you wouldn't write down.** No account numbers, codes or passwords out loud either.

## ChatGPT Voice

1. In the ChatGPT app, tap the **Voice** icon in the message bar at the bottom (on a computer, it's in the message box on chatgpt.com).
2. If your phone asks, **allow** the microphone.
3. The first time, pick a voice you like. You can change it later in **Settings → Voice**.
4. Start talking. Tap the microphone button to mute yourself, and the exit button to end.

OpenAI says the free plan includes **limited** Voice time, and the limit can change. When you reach it, ChatGPT tells you, and you can keep going by typing. OpenAI says voice audio is kept with the chat for 30 days and isn't used for training unless you choose to share it, but the written transcript can be used if "Improve the model for everyone" is on (see Day 1).

### **Gemini Live**

1. Open the **Gemini** phone app. (Google says Gemini Live isn't available on the gemini.google.com website for now.)
2. Tap **Live** at the bottom of the screen. The first time, follow the instructions on screen.
3. Start talking. Tap **Hold** or **End** when you're done. When you end, you get a written copy of the conversation in the chat.

### **Claude voice mode**

1. Open the **Claude** phone app.
2. Tap the **sound wave icon** next to the microphone in the typing box. (The microphone alone is for "dictation," which turns your speech into text but answers in writing.)
3. Choose a voice, then start talking. Tap **Stop** when you're done.

Anthropic says voice mode is in "beta" (a test version) and is available on the free plan, and that voice conversations count toward your normal free usage.

### **The first thing to say (works in all three):**

Voice answers can run long, and the AI may jump in when you pause to think. Say this at the start:

Please keep your answers short, two or three sentences. Ask me one question at a time. Speak a little slowly. If I pause, wait until I say "go ahead" before you answer.

It works most of the time, though a long pause or background noise can still make it jump in.

### Things to try out loud:

I need to call [the cable company] about [a bill that went up]. Pretend to be the customer service person. Be a little difficult, like a real call can be. When we finish, tell me what I said well and one thing to say more clearly.

Walk me through making [chili for 4] one step at a time. After each step, stop and wait until I say "next."

I'm trying to decide [whether to keep fixing my old car or replace it]. Don't give me an answer. Ask me questions one at a time to help me think. When I say "wrap up," give me a short written summary.

## Part 2: Ask about a photo

You can show the AI a picture and ask about it: a warning label, a plant, an appliance error code, the inside of your fridge, a form.

1. Tap the **+** (**plus**) button next to the typing box.
2. Choose **Camera** to take a new photo, or **Photos** to pick one you already have.
3. Type (or say) your question, then send.

### A message that makes photo answers more reliable:

First, tell me what you see in this photo, so I can correct you if you've got it wrong. Then answer my question: [your question]. If you're not sure, say so.

**Gemini bonus: live camera.** In a Gemini Live conversation on your phone, tap the **camera** button to show Gemini what your camera sees and talk about it as you go. Tap it again to stop sharing. (ChatGPT's newest voice mode doesn't support live video. OpenAI says live video is only for eligible paid subscribers using its older "Advanced" voice.)

## Try it now

1. Start a voice conversation and say the "first thing to say" script.
2. Try one of the "out loud" ideas above for 3 minutes.
3. Then take a photo of something around the house, like a label, a dashboard light or a houseplant, and ask about it using the photo message above.

## Common mistakes on Day 5

- **Talking in a noisy room.** Move somewhere quiet or use headphones. (On an iPhone with ChatGPT, OpenAI suggests opening Control Center during the call, tapping **Mic Mode**, and choosing **Voice Isolation**.)
- **Using it while driving.** Set things up before you drive, and follow the law where you live.
- **Showing private things on camera.** Keep ID cards, account numbers, screens with personal info, and other people's faces out of the picture. Ask people before you include them.
- **Trusting what it "sees" without checking.** It can misread a photo. Asking it to describe the photo first helps you catch that.
- **Using it for safety-critical calls.** For gas, electrical, medical or car-safety issues, use it for a first look only. Then call a professional.

## Day 5 checklist

- ☐ I had a spoken conversation with AI

- ☐ I used the "first thing to say" script
- ☐ I sent a photo and asked a question about it
- ☐ I asked it to describe the photo first
- ☐ I kept private things out of the picture

**Free practice: - How to use ChatGPT Voice: talk instead of type:**

[ailifescrillsacademy.com/blog/chatgpt-voice-talk-instead-of-type.html](https://ailifescrillsacademy.com/blog/chatgpt-voice-talk-instead-of-type.html) - **Gemini**

**Live camera mode: 5 free everyday uses:**

[ailifescrillsacademy.com/blog/gemini-live-camera-everyday-uses.html](https://ailifescrillsacademy.com/blog/gemini-live-camera-everyday-uses.html) -

**Diagnose a home repair from a photo, safely:**

[ailifescrillsacademy.com/drills/home-fix-from-a-photo.html](https://ailifescrillsacademy.com/drills/home-fix-from-a-photo.html) - **Plan dinner from**

**what's in your fridge:** [ailifescrillsacademy.com/drills/fridge-dinner.html](https://ailifescrillsacademy.com/drills/fridge-dinner.html)

# Day 6: Staying safe: scams, fact-checking, and what never to share

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**Today's goal:** know what never to share, how to check what AI tells you, and how to use AI to spot a scam.

**Time:** about 25 minutes.

## Part 1: What never to paste, type or say

Keep this list somewhere you can see it:

- **Passwords** and **one-time codes** (the 6-digit codes sent by text or email)
- **Full bank account, credit card or debit card numbers**
- **Social Security, Medicare, passport or driver's license numbers**
- **Your full date of birth together with your full name and address**
- **Other people's private information** (their health, money, or contact details)
- **Anything confidential from work** unless your employer says it's allowed

You never need any of these to get good help. Use placeholders like "[my bank]" or "[amount]" instead.

## Part 2: Why AI gets things wrong, and how to check

AI tools write by predicting what words should come next. Most of the time that works well. But sometimes they produce something that sounds right and isn't, like a wrong date, a made-up quote, or a phone number that doesn't exist. People call this a **"hallucination."** It doesn't mean the AI is lying on purpose. It means **you should check anything that matters.**

### The 3-step check:

1. **Ask for sources:**

Where does this information come from? Search the web and give me links to official or well-known sources. Tell me clearly which parts you couldn't confirm.

1. **Open the links yourself.** Make sure the page really says what the AI claims. (Sometimes it doesn't.)
2. **For anything about health, money, the law or safety, confirm with a person or an official website** (your doctor, your bank, a government site).

**Watch out for dates and "news."** AI may not know about very recent events unless it searches the web. For anything recent, ask it to search and show links, or check a trusted news site.

### Part 3: Use AI to check a suspicious message

Scam texts and emails are getting more convincing, partly because scammers use AI too. Here's how to use AI on your side:

1. **Don't tap any link, call any number in the message, or reply.**
2. Copy the message text, and **delete your name, account numbers and any codes** from the copy.
3. Paste it into your AI app with this message:

Help me check if this message is a scam. I'm not a tech person, so keep it plain.

Who it says it's from: [e.g. "my bank" / "the toll company" / "my grandson"]

What it wants me to do: [e.g. tap a link / call a number / send gift cards]

Was I expecting it? [yes / no / not sure]

1) List every red flag you see and explain each one in one plain sentence.

2) List anything that looks normal.

3) Give me a verdict: looks normal / be careful / likely scam.

4) Tell me the safe way to check it myself without using any link or number in the message.

Don't open or visit any links. If you can't tell, say so.

The message (my personal details removed):

[paste the message]

1. **Whatever the AI says, check it yourself** by contacting the company or person through a phone number or website you already trust.

**Important:** "Looks normal" is not a green light. The AI can't see where a link really goes, and scams can be written to fool AI too.

## Part 4: Fake voices and "emergency" calls

The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) warns that some scammers use AI to copy a loved one's voice from a short audio clip, then call pretending to be in trouble and needing money fast. The FTC's advice:

- **Don't trust the voice, even if it sounds just like them.** Resist the pressure to send money right away.
- **Hang up and call the person back** on a number you already know is theirs.

- **Ask a question only the real person would know**, like "What kind of dog do you have?"
- **Call someone else in the family** to check, even if the caller says to keep it secret.
- **Be very wary of anyone who wants payment** by wire transfer, cryptocurrency, a payment app or gift cards.

**Our extra tip:** agree on a family "safe word" ahead of time that you can ask for if a call ever feels off.

**In the US:** forward scam texts to **7726** (it spells SPAM), and report fraud at **ReportFraud.ftc.gov**. If you already shared a card or bank detail, call your bank right away using the number on your card.

## **Part 5: Fake AI apps and "AI experts"**

- Only use the official apps from Day 1. Check the company name.
- Be wary of anyone who offers to "set up your AI" and asks for your passwords or remote access to your computer.
- No real AI company will call you out of the blue to ask for payment or your sign-in code.

## **Try it now**

1. Find a suspicious text or email (most of us have one in our inbox or spam folder). Remove your personal details and run it through the scam-check message above.
2. Ask your AI a question you already know the answer to, like something about your town or your job. Then ask for sources and open one link. Did it get everything right?

## Common mistakes on Day 6

- **Believing a confident answer.** Confidence isn't the same as correct. Check what matters.
- **Not opening the links.** A list of sources is only useful if you look at them.
- **Tapping a link "just to see."** Check the message first, without tapping.
- **Paying under pressure.** Real organizations give you time to check. Urgency is a red flag.

## Day 6 checklist

- ☐ I know the "never share" list
- ☐ I asked for sources and opened at least one link
- ☐ I checked a suspicious message with AI without tapping anything in it
- ☐ I know to call back on a number I trust
- ☐ I talked with my family about a safe word (or plan to)

**Free practice: - Check if a text or email is a scam:**

[ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/scam-message-check.html](https://ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/scam-message-check.html) - **Fact-check a**

**claim with AI, safely:** [ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/fact-check-a-claim.html](https://ailifekillsacademy.com/drills/fact-check-a-claim.html) -

**Is this video AI? A 2-minute check to share with family:**

[ailifekillsacademy.com/blog/is-this-video-ai-quick-check.html](https://ailifekillsacademy.com/blog/is-this-video-ai-quick-check.html)

# Day 7: Build a habit, and what comes next

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**Today's goal:** make AI a small, useful part of your week, and know where to go from here.

**Time:** about 15–20 minutes.

## The secret: one real thing a day

People who get comfortable with AI aren't the ones who learn the most features. They're the ones who use it for **one real thing, most days**, for a few weeks. Not a test. A real task from your life.

### Make it easy to remember:

- **Pick a time.** With your morning coffee, after lunch, or while dinner's in the oven.
- **Put the app on your home screen.** On a phone, press and hold the app icon and move it to your first screen.
- **Keep it to 10 minutes.** Small and steady beats long and rare.

## Your "favorite messages" note

When a message works well for you, save it. Open the notes app on your phone (or a notebook) and make a note called **"My AI messages."** Paste in the ones you like from this guide. Next time, just copy, change the [brackets], and go.

## 30 everyday ideas to try

Pick one each day. Use the 3-part recipe from Day 2: who you are, what you need, what good looks like.

**Home and family** 1. Plan 3 dinners from what's in your fridge. 2. Make a simple weekly chore list for the household. 3. Get gift ideas for someone hard to shop for, under a set budget. 4. Plan a rainy-day afternoon with the

grandkids. 5. Write a kind note to a friend who's going through a hard time. 6. Make a packing list for a trip.

**Money and paperwork** 7. Explain a letter or bill in plain English (Day 4). 8. Build a simple budget around your paydays. 9. List questions to ask before signing up for a new phone or internet plan. 10. Compare two options you're deciding between, with pros and cons. 11. Prepare questions for a call with your insurance company.

**Health and wellbeing** (to prepare for appointments, not to replace them) 12. Write down questions for your next doctor's visit. 13. Make a gentle 10-minute stretching routine (check with your doctor first if you have health concerns). 14. Plan a week of simple, healthy lunches on a budget. 15. Turn a long list of medicines into a tidy table to bring to appointments (use names only, nothing that identifies you).

**Learning and fun** 16. Explain a news topic you've heard about, in simple words (then check a trusted news site). 17. Learn 5 phrases in another language before a trip (great by voice). 18. Get a book recommendation based on 3 books you loved. 19. Find out the story behind a family recipe or tradition (and check the facts). 20. Ask it to quiz you on something you're learning.

**Work and job hunting** 21. Turn a job listing into talking points for an interview. 22. Practice interview questions out loud (Day 5). 23. Rewrite a work email to sound clearer and friendlier. 24. Turn messy meeting notes into 5 clear bullet points. 25. Describe your experience in simple, strong sentences for a résumé (and don't let it invent anything).

**Technology help** 26. Ask how to do something on your phone, step by step ("How do I make the text bigger on my iPhone?"). 27. Explain a tech word like you're 12. 28. Get step-by-step help turning on two-step sign-in (extra security) for your email account. 29. Check a suspicious text or email (Day 6). 30. Ask: "What's one thing you could help me with this week, based on what I've told you?"

## Help someone else

One of the best ways to get comfortable is to show someone else. If you have a friend, parent or neighbor who's curious, sit beside them, let them hold the phone, and start with Day 1. One easy win beats a long lesson.

## Do I need a paid plan?

**Not for anything in this guide.** Paid plans mostly give you more use before you hit limits, more voice time, and more advanced features. If you find yourself hitting limits every day after a few weeks of regular use, then it's worth comparing. Until then, free is fine. Prices and plans change often, so check the company's own pricing page before you pay.

## Where to go from here

- **Free weekday drills:** short, 5-minute exercises with copy-and-paste messages for everyday life: [ailifeskillsacademy.com/drills/](https://ailifeskillsacademy.com/drills/)
- **Free email:** get a new drill in your inbox on weekdays. Sign up at [ailifeskillsacademy.com](https://ailifeskillsacademy.com)
- **Blog:** plain-English guides to new features as they come out: [ailifeskillsacademy.com/blog/](https://ailifeskillsacademy.com/blog/)

## Try it now

1. Move your AI app to your phone's home screen.
2. Create your "My AI messages" note and paste in your 3 favorite messages from this guide.
3. Pick your time of day, and pick tomorrow's idea from the list of 30.

## Common mistakes on Day 7

- **Trying to learn everything.** You don't need every feature. A few useful habits are enough.
- **Stopping after a weird answer.** Use a "fix it" message (Day 2) or start a new chat.
- **Only using it for "tests."** Use it for real things. That's where it clicks.
- **Forgetting the golden rules.** Postcard rule, check what matters, you're in charge.

## Day 7 checklist

- ☐ My AI app is on my home screen
- ☐ I have a "My AI messages" note with at least 3 messages
- ☐ I picked a daily time: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I picked my next 3 ideas from the list of 30
- ☐ I know where the free drills are

**You did it.** Seven days ago, AI may have felt like something for other people. Now you've set it up safely, asked good questions, written with it, decoded paperwork, talked to it, shown it photos, and learned how to stay safe. Be proud of that. Keep going at your own pace.

# Quick reference: settings cheat sheet

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Checked against each company's help pages in October 2026. Menu names can change. If you can't find something, look for similar words or ask the app where it is.

| What you want                                | ChatGPT                                                                                  | Gemini                                                                                 | Claude                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Stop chats being used to train the AI</b> | Settings → Data controls → turn off "Improve the model for everyone"                     | Settings & help → Activity → turn off "Keep Activity" (or set auto-delete to 3 months) | Settings → Privacy → turn off "Help improve our AI models" |
| <b>A private, one-off chat</b>               | New chat → Temporary                                                                     | Temporary chat (next to New chat)                                                      | Ghost icon on a new chat                                   |
| <b>Tell it about yourself once</b>           | Settings → Personalization (computer) or Customize ChatGPT (phone) → Custom Instructions | Settings & help → Personal Intelligence → Instructions for Gemini                      | Settings → Instructions for Claude                         |
| <b>Memory on or off</b>                      | Settings → Personalization → Memory                                                      | Settings → Personal Intelligence → Memory (where available)                            | Settings → Memory                                          |
| <b>Talk out loud</b>                         | Voice icon in the message bar                                                            | Live (phone app only)                                                                  | Sound wave icon (next to the microphone)                   |
| <b>Send a photo</b>                          | + button                                                                                 | + button                                                                               | + button                                                   |
| <b>Delete your chats</b>                     | Delete a chat from your chat list                                                        | Settings & help → Activity → Delete                                                    | Delete a chat from your chat list                          |

# The one-page recipe card

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**The 3-part recipe** 1. Who am I? 2. What do I need? 3. What does "good" look like?

**When the answer isn't right, say:** - "Shorter, please." - "Simpler words." - "Use the details I gave you." - "Explain [this part] like I'm 12." - "Ask me 3 questions first." - "Which parts are you sure about, and which are guesses? Show me sources."

**The 3 golden rules** 1. Postcard rule: never share what you wouldn't put on a postcard. 2. Confident isn't correct: check what matters. 3. You're in charge: you decide, you send, you sign.

# Sources we checked (October 2026)

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We checked every setting and step in this guide against these official pages. Apps change often, so the official pages are the best place to look if something on your screen doesn't match.

**OpenAI (ChatGPT)** - Data controls in ChatGPT:

[help.openai.com/en/articles/7730893](https://help.openai.com/en/articles/7730893) - Temporary chat in ChatGPT:

[help.openai.com/en/articles/8914046](https://help.openai.com/en/articles/8914046) - ChatGPT Voice:

[help.openai.com/en/articles/20001274](https://help.openai.com/en/articles/20001274) - Memory in ChatGPT:

[help.openai.com/en/articles/8590148](https://help.openai.com/en/articles/8590148) - ChatGPT Custom Instructions:

[help.openai.com/en/articles/8096356](https://help.openai.com/en/articles/8096356) - ChatGPT Free Tier FAQ:

[help.openai.com/en/articles/9275245](https://help.openai.com/en/articles/9275245)

**Google (Gemini)** - Gemini Apps Privacy Hub:

[support.google.com/gemini/answer/13594961](https://support.google.com/gemini/answer/13594961) - Manage and delete your activity in Gemini Apps: [support.google.com/gemini/answer/13278892](https://support.google.com/gemini/answer/13278892) - Use Gemini Apps (including temporary chats):

[support.google.com/gemini/answer/13275745](https://support.google.com/gemini/answer/13275745) - Instructions for Gemini and Memory: [support.google.com/gemini/answer/16598625](https://support.google.com/gemini/answer/16598625) - Talk naturally with Gemini Live: [support.google.com/gemini/answer/15274899](https://support.google.com/gemini/answer/15274899)

**Anthropic (Claude)** - Change your model improvement privacy settings:

[privacy.claude.com/en/articles/12109829](https://privacy.claude.com/en/articles/12109829) - Use incognito chats:

[support.claude.com/en/articles/12260368](https://support.claude.com/en/articles/12260368) - Use voice mode:

[support.claude.com/en/articles/11101966](https://support.claude.com/en/articles/11101966) - Claude's personalization features:

[support.claude.com/en/articles/10185728](https://support.claude.com/en/articles/10185728) - Release notes (memory on the free plan): [support.claude.com/en/articles/12138966](https://support.claude.com/en/articles/12138966)

**Scam safety** - FTC: Scammers use fake emergencies to steal your money:

[consumer.ftc.gov/articles/scammers-use-fake-emergencies-steal-your-money](https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/scammers-use-fake-emergencies-steal-your-money) -

Report fraud: [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://ReportFraud.ftc.gov)

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