

BEGINNER

AI Basics: What AI Is (and Isn't)

A plain-language introduction for complete beginners

Free guide

About 10 minutes to read

tanimawoai.com

Free AI training every Sunday
with Dr. Daniel Tanimawo

What is artificial intelligence?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is software that can do tasks we used to think only people could do: understand questions, write text, recognise faces in photos, translate languages and spot patterns in numbers.

AI does not think or feel like a person. It learns **patterns from a very large number of examples**. A chatbot like ChatGPT has read huge amounts of text, so it is very good at predicting what words should come next in a helpful answer.

In one sentence: AI is a tool that learned from examples, so it can recognise and produce things that look like those examples.

AI you already use

- **Your phone keyboard** suggests the next word as you type.
- **Google Maps** predicts traffic and picks a faster route.
- **Your bank** flags strange card payments as possible fraud.
- **YouTube, TikTok and Netflix** recommend what to watch next.
- **Face unlock** on your phone recognises your face.
- **Spam filters** keep junk out of your email inbox.

The new kind: generative AI

Generative AI **creates** new things: text, images, audio, video and code. You describe what you want in normal words (a **prompt**), and it produces a result in seconds.

You want	Example tools (free versions)
Answers, writing, ideas	ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Copilot
Images and designs	Canva Magic Studio, Microsoft Designer
Slides	Gamma, Canva Presentations
Research with sources	Perplexity, NotebookLM
Voice and video	ElevenLabs, CapCut

What AI is good at

- Drafting emails, letters, captions and reports

- Explaining hard topics simply, in many languages
- Brainstorming names, ideas and plans
- Summarising long documents
- Turning messy notes into neat lists and tables

What AI is NOT good at

- **Knowing it is wrong.** AI can state false facts with total confidence (this is called a **hallucination**).
- **Today's news,** unless the tool searches the web.
- **Your private situation.** It only knows what you tell it.
- **Judgement and responsibility.** You are always responsible for what you do with an answer.

Golden rule: use AI as a clever helper, not as a judge. Check anything important.

Common myths

Myth	Truth
AI understands like a human	It predicts patterns; it does not understand or feel
AI is always right	It makes mistakes and can invent facts
You need to code to use AI	You just type (or speak) in normal language
AI will replace everyone	It changes jobs; people who use AI well are in demand
AI is only for rich countries	Free tools work on an ordinary phone, anywhere

Try it today (5 minutes)

- ☐ Open a free AI chatbot on your phone or computer.
- ☐ Type: **Explain artificial intelligence to me like I am 12, using an example from a Nigerian market.**
- ☐ Then type: **Now give me 3 ways I could use AI in my daily life.**
- ☐ Notice how you can keep asking follow-up questions, like a conversation.

Keep learning, free

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