

Getting Started with AI

A Workshop for Beginners • 1.5 Hours

Before We Begin — Please Bring:

- Your phone or tablet, charged
- Your Apple ID or Google account password (you'll need to sign in)
- A couple of photos already on your phone or tablet
- A short paragraph you've written (even a few sentences) — we'll use it later

Today's Agenda

Time	Activity
0:00 – 0:15	Welcome & installing your AI apps
0:15 – 0:40	Asking AI questions — “Prompting 101” + practice
0:40 – 1:05	Writing help — letters, memories & editing your own writing
1:05 – 1:25	Photo help with Gemini & Google Lens
1:25 – 1:30	Wrap-up & questions

What Is Artificial Intelligence?

AI is simply a very knowledgeable assistant you can have a conversation with. You type a question or request in plain English — just as you would ask a friend — and it gives you a helpful, thoughtful answer. There is nothing technical you need to know to use it.

Think of it as:

- A knowledgeable friend available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Someone who can help you write letters, answer questions, explain confusing documents
- A tool that gets better results the more clearly you describe what you need
- A conversation — not just a single question and answer like a Google search

Before We Begin — Important Reassurances

You cannot break anything

There is no wrong question. Nothing you type will damage the app, your phone, or your computer.

Your privacy matters

Do NOT share: Social Security numbers, passwords, bank account details, or credit card numbers with any AI app.

AI can occasionally be wrong

Always verify important medical, legal, or financial information with a qualified professional. Use AI to prepare better questions for your doctor or lawyer — not to replace them.

It does not remember you

Each new conversation starts completely fresh. The AI does not store or remember anything from previous sessions.

Section 1 — Installing Your Apps

We'll install two apps today:

- Claude — great for general questions and for writing (letters, memories, and more)
- Gemini — great for general questions and for working with photos

iPhone or iPad

1. Open the App Store (blue icon with a white “A”)
2. Tap the Search icon (magnifying glass, bottom right)
3. Type the app name: “Claude” or “Gemini”
4. Tap Get, then confirm with Face ID, Touch ID, or your Apple ID password
5. Once installed, tap the app icon to open it and sign in (you may need a Google account)

Android Phone or Tablet

1. Open the Google Play Store (colorful triangle icon)
2. Tap the search bar at the top

3. Type the app name: “Claude” or “Gemini”
4. Tap Install
5. Once installed, tap Open (or find the icon on your home screen) and sign in

A Few Things to Know

- You'll need a stable Wi-Fi or cellular connection to download
- Most apps — especially Gemini — will ask you to sign in with a Google account
- Make sure you have some free storage space on your device

Section 2 — Asking AI Questions

Asking AI a question is a bit like using Google — but instead of a list of websites, you get a direct answer, often with the reasoning included. Asking a question of an AI app is called “prompting.”

Try These Together in Class

- Practical: “How often should I change my home’s air filters — and is it worth buying better-quality ones?”
- History: “What were the primary reasons for the War of 1812?”
- Local: “What are some good restaurants near Georgetown, Texas?”
- Explain simply: “How do HOAs work in Texas, and why do they exist?”

Key Idea: It’s a Conversation

Unlike a Google search, you can ask follow-up questions — “Can you explain that more simply?” or “What about in Williamson County specifically?” The AI remembers what you already asked.

Prompting 101 — 5 Tips for Better Answers

1. Be clear and specific — “How do I fix a leaky kitchen faucet? I’m not very handy, so keep it simple” works better than “How do I fix a leak?”
2. State your goal — do you want instructions, ideas, or advice? Say so.
3. Ask for the format you want — a numbered list, a simple explanation, a short comparison, a summary.
4. Give the AI a “persona” — “Act as a friendly, experienced chef and explain how to poach an egg” often gets a better answer.
5. If the first answer isn’t quite right, refine it — add detail, rephrase, or just ask a follow-up question.

Household: “How do I reset a tripped circuit breaker, and what should I do if it trips again immediately?”

Health: “What are effective home remedies for a sore throat that don’t involve medication?”

Food: “I have pasta, canned tomatoes, garlic, and onion — give me a quick, easy sauce recipe.”

Travel: “I’m going to Rome for 3 days and want to see the main historical sites. What’s a good itinerary?”

More Things You Can Ask About

- Health: explain a diagnosis or medical term in plain English, or prepare questions for your doctor. (AI is not a doctor — use it to inform your conversations with one, never to replace them.)
- Travel: translate foreign-language text from a photo
- Entertainment: book recommendations, crossword help, genealogy research
- Grandchildren: help writing messages, understanding slang, or finding gift ideas

Area	Try Asking This
Health	Explain what Type 2 diabetes means in simple terms
	What questions should I ask my doctor about high blood pressure?
	What are common side effects of metformin?
Writing Help	Write a polite complaint letter to my insurance company about a denied claim
	Help me write a thank you note to my neighbour who helped me last week
	Can you improve this email I wrote? [paste your email]
Everyday Questions	What is the difference between Medicare and Medicaid?
	Explain what a reverse mortgage is in simple terms
	What does this confusing term in my contract mean? [paste the text]
Family & Fun	Help me write down my memories of growing up in [your town] in the 1950s
	Suggest some books similar to ones I enjoy by [author name]
	What gift would suit a 10 year old boy who likes [hobby]?
Travel	Plan a 5 day trip to Italy for two people who enjoy history and good food
	What do I need to know about travelling to [country] as an American?
	Suggest some day trips from Georgetown Texas
Photos (Gemini)	Upload a photo and ask: What plant is this and how do I care for it?
	Upload a photo and ask: Can you enhance this old family photo?
	Upload a photo and ask: What bird is this?

Section 3 — Writing Help

AI is excellent at helping you write — or improve something you've already written.

- Letters and emails — including a complaint letter that explains the problem, the solution you'd like, and next steps
- Editing your own writing — paste in something you've written and ask Claude to improve it
- Simplifying documents — paste in a confusing insurance or legal document and ask for a plain-English explanation
- Greeting card messages
- Family history — turning your notes into a written family story or memoir passage

1. Letter to the Editor

Goal: share your opinion on an issue and make your case clearly.

When you prompt, include: the topic, your stance, your main supporting points, the tone you want, and — if known — which publication.

“Write a letter to the editor arguing for increased funding for public transportation. My main points: it reduces traffic congestion, improves air quality, and provides more equitable access. Tone: formal and persuasive.”

“Draft a letter to the editor of ‘The Sun’ expressing concern about people jumping off the cliffs at Blue Hole park. I want to emphasize the safety issues. Keep it concise and impactful.”

2. Letter to a Friend

Goal: share news and stay personally connected. Include: who you're writing to, your purpose, the updates you want to share, questions you want to ask, and your desired tone.

“Write a casual letter to my friend Sarah, who I haven't seen in months. Tell her about my new job and my recent mountain trip, and ask how her new puppy is doing. Keep it excited and friendly.”

3. Preserving a Memory

Goal: capture a meaningful memory in writing. Include: the memory itself, sensory details (sights, sounds, smells), the emotions involved, who else was there, why it matters, and the format you want (story, journal entry, poem).

“Describe my childhood Christmases at my grandparents' house — the smell of pine and baking, the sound of carols, the feeling of warmth and family. Tone: nostalgic and warm.”

Start simple: Begin with a question you genuinely want answered. The first successful answer builds confidence quickly.

Be patient: Sometimes the first answer needs adjustment. Just say Please try again or Can you make that simpler?

Save good answers: Copy and paste helpful responses into a document or email to yourself for later reference.

Ask for simpler language: If an answer is too technical just say Please explain that in simpler terms.

Use it for family: Ask AI to help you write messages to grandchildren, find gift ideas, or understand something they mentioned.

Health questions: AI is excellent for preparing questions to ask your doctor and for understanding medical terms in plain English. Always discuss with your doctor before making any health decisions.

Section 4 — Photo Help with Gemini

Pick a photo from your phone or tablet, import it into Gemini, and describe what you'd like to do.

- Add or remove elements: “Add a friendly dog in the foreground” or “Remove the person in the background”
- Change the setting: “Put this person on a tropical beach”
- Adjust mood or lighting: “Make this scene look like sunset”
- Combine two photos: move a person or object from one photo into another (for example, moving a birthday cake into a portrait, or placing a family member at a location you visited together)
- Generate variations: “Show me three different artistic versions of this image”

Identifying and Describing Photos

- Upload an old family photo and ask Claude what it can tell you from the clothing and setting
- Identify plants, birds, or objects in a photo — very popular with our seniors!
- Google Lens is another handy free tool for identifying what's in a photo

Quick Reference — Take This Home

1. Be clear and specific about what you need.
2. Say what you want the answer to look like (a list, a summary, simple steps).
3. Give AI a role if it helps: “Act as a...”
4. Not right the first time? Ask a follow-up — it's a conversation.
5. For health or legal matters, use AI to prepare questions — not to replace your doctor or lawyer.