

MODULE 1 · WEEK 1 · LESSON 1

Welcome to the AI Era: What AI Really Is (and Isn't)

Separate the science from the hype

WHAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO DO

- Define artificial intelligence in one clear sentence
- Distinguish AI from ordinary software and from human intelligence
- Name three AI systems you already use every day

LESSON CONTENT

The one-sentence definition

Artificial intelligence is the science of building machines that perform tasks which, when a human does them, we say require intelligence. Notice what that definition does NOT say: it does not say the machine thinks, feels or understands. It says the machine performs the task. That single distinction will protect you from both hype and fear for the rest of this course.

Narrow AI vs the science-fiction version

Every AI in existence today is narrow AI: it is excellent at one bounded task, like recognising faces, translating text or predicting the next word. General AI - a machine with human-like reasoning across any domain - does not exist yet. When headlines say 'AI can think', they are almost always describing a very good pattern-matcher.

AI you already touch daily

Spam filters, Google Maps traffic estimates, TikTok and Facebook feeds, bank fraud alerts, Netflix recommendations, autocorrect, fingerprint unlock. You have been a daily AI user for years. This course simply moves you from passive user to intentional operator.

KEY TERMS

Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Machines performing tasks that would require intelligence in humans.
Narrow AI	AI built for one bounded task; the only kind that exists today.
Automation	Rules-based software that follows fixed steps - not AI.
Pattern matching	Finding regularities in data; the engine under most AI.

HANDS-ON TASK

AI audit of your day · Tools: Pen and paper or Notes app

1. For 24 hours, note every moment a machine made a decision for you.
2. List at least 6 AI touchpoints in a notebook or your phone.
3. For each, write one line: what data did it probably use?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Before you go, three takeaways from this lesson.
- ✓ One: Define artificial intelligence in one clear sentence.

- ✓ Two: Distinguish AI from ordinary software and from human intelligence.
- ✓ Three: Name three AI systems you already use every day.
- ✓ And your hands-on task: ai audit of your day.
- ✓ For 24 hours, note every moment a machine made a decision for you.
- ✓ When it is done, mark the lesson complete on your dashboard, keep the artifact for your portfolio, and step into the next lesson.
- ✓ I will see you there.

Watch the lesson video on your dashboard, complete the task, then mark the lesson complete. Your artifact belongs in your Portfolio of Evidence.