

LIFE ONLINE

Artificial Intelligence – AI

AI stands for artificial intelligence and refers to the use of technological tools to imitate human cognition – the brain’s ability to receive, store, process and use information. The technology has been developed over several decades, but in recent years it has had a public breakthrough thanks to powerful services with everyday uses. The development has been driven by improved algorithms, cheaper processing power and access to large amounts of data.

AI and machine learning

AI is a term that has historically covered many different technologies and methods, but the AI we see today is based on a method known as machine learning. Machine learning involves computers learning from past experience on their own and then applying that knowledge in new contexts.

In machine learning, probabilities are built from example data so that, based on known values, it is possible to estimate future unknown values. If the examples are sufficiently representative of reality and of the problem being addressed, the estimates will also be close to reality.

What is generative AI?

Generative AI refers to AI models that generate new material based on the data the model has been trained on. The output can be text, images, video, audio – or a combination of these.. The AI services that have become popular in recent years are based

on generative models, and differ from other common models used for tasks such as spam filtering, image recognition or those found in the recommendation systems of digital platforms.

Generative AI has been criticised for potentially infringing copyright, as the models may have been trained on material without the permission of the rights holder. The technology processes very large training datasets and generates new material based on work created by others, often without the individuals being compensated for their work. Generative AI can also produce false statements because the models do not possess actual knowledge, but instead make probabilistic assessments based on learned patterns. The fact that the technology requires such large amounts of data also means that these services sometimes store what is shared with them.

As a user, you should therefore avoid entering sensitive information about yourself or others into various AI services.

What are deep fakes?

Generative AI has paved the way for so-called deep-fakes – AI-generated images or videos that are highly realistic. Deepfakes are particularly difficult to distinguish from other realistic digital images and videos because they are not edited or retouched, but digitally created synthetic originals. However, they may contain other flaws that reveal them, but the technology is constantly improving and it may become more difficult

to distinguish genuine material from fake. A critical approach to media use is essential, and reliable sources play an important role.

What is an AI companion?

An AI companion, or digital companion, is a generative AI service that simulates human relationships. The service often takes the form of a personal assistant, mentor or close friend, but there are also services designed for role-playing or with a romantic undertone. An AI companion can take different forms – from a simple chatbot on a website to human-like speaking avatars. Different services have different focuses and often cost money to use.

Human psychology means that we quickly perceive human-like qualities in what we see. We can therefore form close relationships with objects and animals – or with AI. AI companion services can provide emotional support, but they have also been criticised for fostering unhealthy relationships and encouraging questionable life choices. This can be particularly problematic for children and young people, and there have been calls for people under the age of 18 not to use these services at all.

On the website of the Swedish Agency for the Media (Mediemyndigheten) you will find simple tips, support and materials on children's and young people's media habits for both adults and children.

The Swedish Agency for the Media monitors and analyses developments in the media sector and in children's and young people's media use. The agency also works to protect children from harmful media content.

Safer Internet Centre Sverige is a joint effort to ensure the safety of children and young people online. Swedish Agency for the Media runs Safer Internet Centre Sweden together with the children's rights organisations BRIS and ECPAT Sweden.



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Share of children who use AI chatbots once a week or more, by gender (%)

Source: Youth & Media 2025 (Ungar & medier 2025), Mediemyndighet

