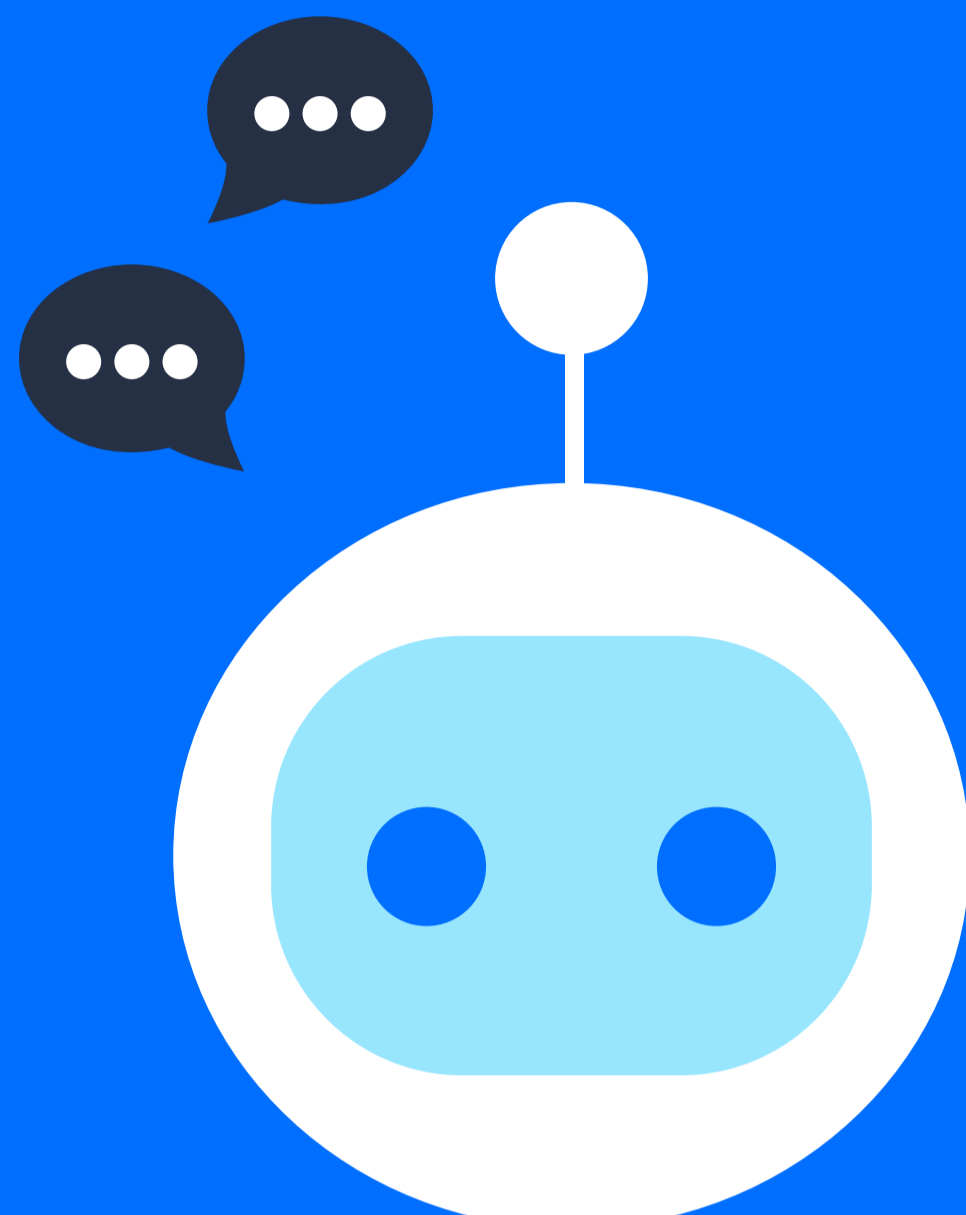


# Talking about AI – a guide for families

internet matters.org

Conversation starters and activities to help parents talk to children about artificial intelligence



Helping children understand how AI works and how to use it safely starts with regular conversations and small, age-appropriate activities.

Use this guide to explore AI together and encourage curiosity, critical thinking and healthy digital habits.

## Supporting children at different ages

- ▶ **Early years (0-5s)** – Exploring together
- ▶ **Young children (6-10)** – Building their understanding
- ▶ **Tweens (11-13)** – Focusing on critical thinking
- ▶ **Teens (14+)** – Using AI responsibly





## Early years (0-5s) Exploring together

### What to say



*“Sometimes we ask phones or smart speakers to help us, like playing music or telling us the weather. But it’s just a machine, it doesn’t really know us or understand like people do.”*

### Try this together

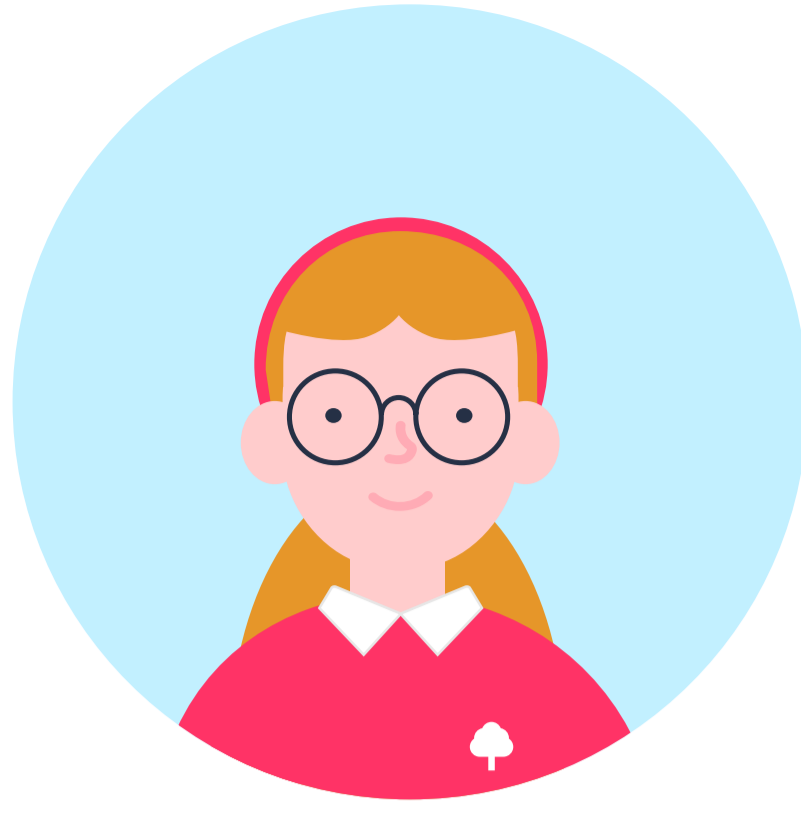


- **Co-play with voice assistants** (for example ask: “What sound does a lion make?” or “Can you sing a song?”). Talk about what it can and can’t do.
- **Draw or act out ‘real’ vs. robot** – ask questions and guess which a robot could answer and which need a person.
- **Practice asking permission** – make it a habit to ask you before talking to an AI assistant on a device.

### Tip



At this age, your presence is key. Keep experiences short, playful and supervised.



# Young children (6-10)

## Building their understanding

### What to say



*“AI is like a robot brain that follows patterns. It doesn’t always know what’s true, so it’s important to ask questions and not believe everything it says.”*

### Conversation starters

- “Have you ever asked a smart speaker or website a question?”
- “Do you think it’s always right?”
- “Where do you think it got that answer from?”
- “What could we ask it together?”

### Try this together



- **Real or chatbot?**

Choose a few short stories, jokes or facts, some written by people, some by AI. Get children to guess which is which and talk about what gave it away.

- **Compare answers**

Ask the same question in an AI tool and then look it up in a book or trusted website. Which feels more reliable and why?

- **Safe questions list**

Make a list of questions that are OK for AI, and which are better for people.

- **Prompt practice**

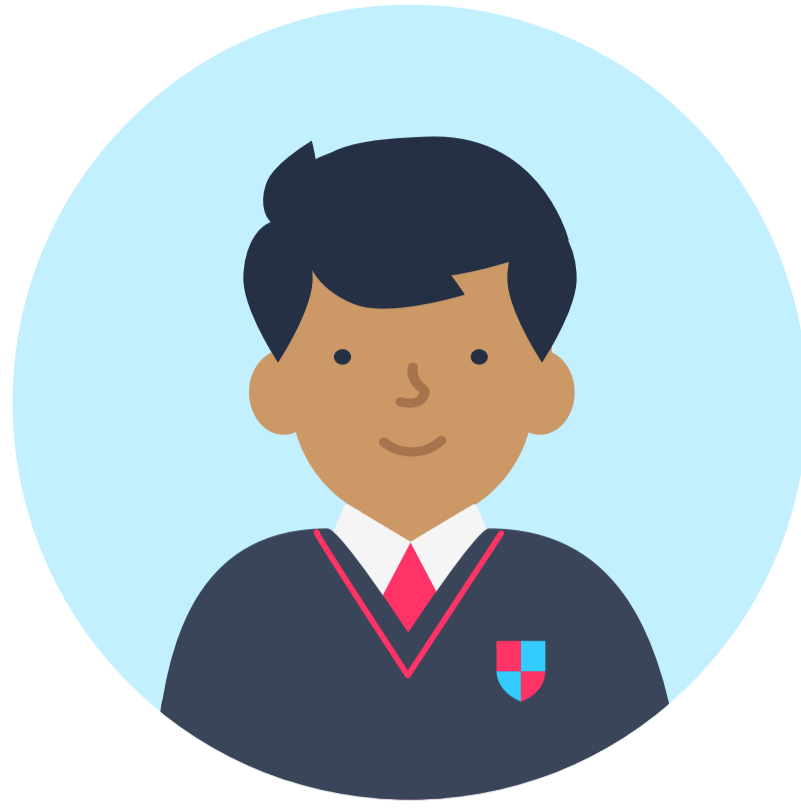
Ask the same question twice, first in a simple way, then with more detail. Then talk about which answer is more helpful?

## Tip



Reinforce that AI doesn't have feelings or opinions, and some topics, like health or friendships, are always best talked through with an adult.





## Tweens (11-13)

# Focusing on critical thinking

### What to say



*“AI can be helpful, but it doesn’t always get things right. It can reflect bias or miss important details, which is why it’s smart to double-check and think before you act on what it says.”*

### Conversation starters

- “What kinds of things would you ask AI?”
- “Why do you think it answered that way?”
- “How can we tell if something is true or made up?”

### Try this together



- **Research challenge**

Ask AI a question, then check the answer using a trusted source like a textbook or child-friendly website. What’s similar? What’s different?

- **Improve the prompt**

Change the wording of a question and see how the response changes.

- **Ask for sources**

Talk about where information comes from and why that matters.

- **Design your own AI**

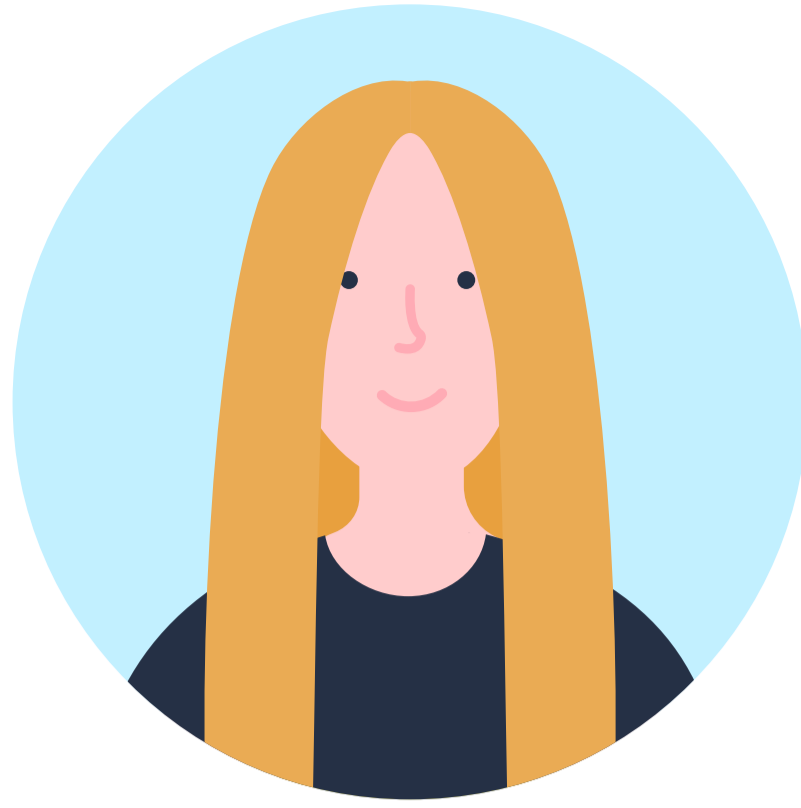
What rules would it follow? What would it not be allowed to do?

## Tip



Reinforce that AI doesn't have feelings or opinions, and some topics, like health or friendships, are always best talked through with an adult.





## Teens (14+)

# Using AI responsibly

### What to say



*“AI can be a great tool for learning and creativity, but it has limits. It’s not a substitute for your ideas, your voice or real relationships.”*

### Conversation starters

- “How do you use AI? What do you like or dislike about it?”
- “Have you seen people use it in ways that don’t feel OK?”
- “Do you think AI changes how people think or learn?”

### Try this together



- **Review AI-generated content**

Read a short AI-written piece on a familiar topic. Challenge teens to spot anything that sounds robotic, off-topic, or that is missing key details.

Ask them how they’d improve it. By adding personality, fixing mistakes, or making it clearer. This builds their critical thinking and editing skills while showing AI is a helpful tool, not the final word.

- **Talk about honesty**

When is AI helping and when is it crossing a line?

- **Real or AI?**

Look at images or videos online and discuss what might be AI-generated.

- **Correct the AI**

Show how to tell an AI tool it's wrong, ask it to check again, or improve an answer.

## Tip



Be open, not judgemental. Help teens reflect on how they use AI and the digital footprint they're creating.

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## If something doesn't feel right

Pause. Talk it through. Check a trusted source. And remind children it's always OK to ask a trusted adult for help.



## Remember

You don't need to be an AI expert. Staying curious, involved and open to conversation matters most.