

A FYTAHQ COMPANION RESOURCE

AI From Scratch

A Plain-Language Course
for people who did not grow up writing software

LESSON 1 OF 8

"No code. No math. No assumed background. No condescension."

What Even Is AI?

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WHAT YOU WILL KNOW AFTER THIS LESSON

- What people actually mean when they say "AI" in twenty twenty-six
- The thirty-second version of how we got here
- Why this topic suddenly became unavoidable in late twenty twenty-two
- The difference between "AI" as a marketing word and AI as the underlying technology
- One sentence you can use at any dinner table to sound informed without overstating

You do not have to remember any of this perfectly. Reading it once is enough. The vocabulary settles in by itself once you have heard it three times.

PLAIN-LANGUAGE EXPLANATION

What people mean today when they say "AI"

The word "AI" stands for **artificial intelligence**. The problem is that the word has been used for at least sixty years to describe at least four completely different things. So when somebody says "AI", they could mean almost anything from a chess program written in nineteen sixty-five to the assistant on your phone.

What people mean today — in twenty twenty-six, in offices, at dinner tables, in the news — is something very specific. They mean a kind of software that can take a sentence you typed and write a sensible reply. Or take a description and produce an image. Or take a recording and write down what was said. Or take a question and search through millions of documents to give you an answer.

The technical name for the current generation is **large language models** — or **LLMs** for short (an LLM is simply this text-writing kind of AI; you will hear the three letters a lot). Just know that when somebody says LLM, they mean the thing under the hood of ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot. Same general idea, different companies.

In the plainest possible terms: a large language model is a computer program that has read an enormous amount of text, and uses what it noticed to predict — one word at a time — a sensible answer to whatever you ask it. That is the whole trick underneath what looks like magic. A very, very good guess about which word should come next, repeated until the answer is finished.

THE ONE LINE YOU CAN USE AT ANY DINNER TABLE

"AI today mostly means software that learned from huge amounts of examples, and can now produce useful text, images, or answers on demand — fast, genuinely helpful, and confidently wrong just often enough that you always check it before you trust it."

THE THIRTY-SECOND HISTORY

How we got from rules to ChatGPT

For most of computing history, software was deterministic. You wrote rules. The computer followed them. If you wanted the program to translate French to English, you wrote a French-to-English rule. This worked badly. Languages have too many exceptions for rules.

In the early two-thousands, researchers started building systems that learned from *examples* instead of being told the rules. Show the computer ten million sentences in both French and English, and it would figure out the patterns on its own. This worked better. Slowly.

Around twenty seventeen, a new design appeared — the "transformer" — that turned out to be much faster and much better at this kind of pattern-learning. Companies started training transformer models on truly large amounts of text from the internet. The results were unexpected. The models could write essays. Answer questions. Write code. Translate poetry.

In late twenty twenty-two, OpenAI released ChatGPT to the public for free. Within two months it had a hundred million users. Most of the world found out the technology existed when their teenage cousin showed them how to use it for homework.

That moment is the reason this topic is on everyone's desk in twenty twenty-six.



PLAIN-LANGUAGE KEY — EVERY TERM USED SO FAR

AI (Artificial Intelligence)

The broad umbrella word. In twenty twenty-six it usually means the text-and-image kind described in this lesson — not robots.

LLM (Large Language Model)

The specific kind of AI behind ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini. It predicts useful text one word at a time.

Model

The actual trained program itself — for example the one called "GPT", or the one called "Claude".

Training

The one-time, expensive process in which the model learned from huge amounts of text, long before you ever used it.

Transformer

The twenty-seventeen design that made today's models possible. You never need to touch it or understand it.

ChatGPT

The free chat product, released late twenty twenty-two, that made the whole world notice this technology at once.

"AI" the marketing word versus AI the technology

You will hear the word "AI" attached to products that do not really need it — toothbrushes, kettles, dating apps. That is marketing. Adding the letters "AI" to a product label increases sales. The product itself often has nothing to do with the technology this course is about.

The real technology — the LLM kind (large language models, the text-writing technology behind ChatGPT and Claude) — is what changed in twenty twenty-two. It runs in giant data centres, it is expensive to operate, and it produces results that look genuinely surprising. The marketing version is a sticker on a box. Both are called "AI". Only one is the thing worth understanding.

A useful rule of thumb: if the product would not be possible without thirty thousand graphics cards running somewhere, it is probably the real thing. If it just has an "AI-powered" sticker on a regular product, it probably is not.

A CONCRETE EXAMPLE

Imagine you sit down at your laptop and type — into Claude, ChatGPT, or Gemini — the following sentence:

"Write a friendly email to my neighbour explaining that the package they signed for last week was mine, and asking when I could pick it up."

Within four or five seconds, the AI writes a complete, polite, grammatically correct email. It correctly identifies that the tone should be friendly-but-not-overly-casual. It thanks the neighbour for signing. It suggests possible pickup times. It signs off appropriately.

You read it. You change two words. You send it.

The whole interaction took thirty seconds. That is what people mean when they say AI in twenty twenty-six. Useful. Fast. Imperfect but usable. Not magic.

THREE THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

WHAT IS SAFE TO SKIP

You do not need to know any of the following to be useful with AI:

- What a transformer architecture actually does on the inside
- Why the model is called "large"
- What gradient descent is, or backpropagation, or attention heads
- The names of the dozen people who invented the transformer
- The difference between GPT-4, GPT-5, Claude 3.5, Claude Opus 4, Gemini 2.5, and so on

None of that is required to use the technology, follow conversations about it, or make sensible decisions in your own life and work. You can come back to those topics if you ever want to. Most people never will.

NEXT TUESDAY

Lesson 2 — The Vocabulary You'll Hear At The Stammtisch

Eighteen plain-language definitions — model, prompt, training, token, context window, API, RAG, agent, and ten more. One paragraph per term, one example each, no jargon. Free on the resources page — no email, no sign-up.

PREFER A LIVE CONVERSATION?

One-on-one sessions with a real person

If you would prefer a real human to walk you through this material in a live one-on-one session instead of reading on your own, the mrocon side of our world offers exactly that — same philosophy as this course, just guided. One hour, two hours, or three hours, depending on how deep you want to go.

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COMPANION VIDEO

Lesson 1 — Video Version on the channel

The Lesson 1 video is live on YouTube today — same material, in video form. The full "AI From Scratch" playlist updates every Tuesday for the next seven weeks. Watch what fits your evening, read what fits your morning.

facelessyoutubeautomationhq.com →

Sources + version note: Content valid as of June 2026. Reference categories: ChatGPT / OpenAI · Claude / Anthropic · Gemini / Google · Microsoft 365 Copilot · EU AI Act (transparency obligations) · YouTube creator-economy reporting. Model version names, prices, and feature availability shift quickly — this lesson focuses on stable categories and principles so it remains useful between update cycles.