

What is generative AI and what's at stake for kids?

Understanding a technology that's reshaping how kids learn, think, and connect

Tips for parents



Did you know?

AI doesn't actually "know" things. AI is a technology, made by humans, that makes computers seem like they have human intelligence and perform tasks like a human. But AI doesn't "know" or "think." Generative AI systems are trained on data from books, art, websites, news, social media, and other sources to create new text, audio, images, video, or code.

AI is everywhere. In 2025, 91% of 13-17 years olds in the U.S. report using generative AI in their personal life and over 50% say they regularly talk to an AI friend.*

AI is designed to keep attention. Most AI systems are designed to hold your attention for as long as possible, reinforce your ideas and feelings, and sound human. AI can make kids feel like they're having a human conversation, but they're not.

AI is reshaping how kids learn, think, feel, and connect to humans. There are serious risks to kids' learning and development if they use AI too much. Overuse of AI can weaken critical thinking skills, replace real-world relationships, and manipulate emotions. In some cases, AI has encouraged kids to hurt themselves. But when AI is carefully designed with approved content and is used with adult guidance, it has the potential to help kids learn in new and more accessible ways.

*A 2025 Cox Mobile Survey and a 2025 Common Sense Media Survey

What to notice

Where your kids are using AI. Kids use AI in school, at home, and in other social and personal spaces. AI is built into homework tools and programs, social media apps, video games, and websites like online shopping sites. Your kid might also be interacting with AI chatbots or companions. In short, if your kid is using a tool or program that generates responses, images, or answers without a human's help, they are probably using AI.

Whether your kids think of AI as their "friend." If your kid is referring to AI chatbots or companions the same way they would refer to people, saying, "he," "she," or "they," they may be forming a bond to the AI chatbot or companion. One way to remember that AI isn't a person is to only refer to AI as "it."

If your kids are using AI to do their work for them. Many kids now use AI for schoolwork—sometimes with teacher guidance, sometimes on their own. Pay attention to whether they are using AI to deepen learning (using AI to create practice questions or brainstorm essay topics) or to do the work for them (using AI to do their math homework or write their essay).

What you can do: Conversations to develop healthy AI awareness

With your kids:

We recommend these activities for kids ages 10-14. But you know your kid best! If these are relevant to you, use them!

- **Conversation starter:** Do you talk with AI chatbots and companions sometimes? What do you talk about?
- **Conversation starter:** When you ask a question or give a prompt in an AI tool, where does the response come from?
- **Activity:** Sit down with your kid. Each of you can write a list of five ways that you or someone you know has used AI recently. Compare your lists.

– **Then talk about:** Did using AI make something quicker or easier? What skills did you not have to use because you used AI? Are those important skills to practice?

In your school or community:

- Ask your kid's teacher or school if they have a policy on AI use for learning in and outside of school. If they do, what is it?
- Ask your kids' teachers what type of AI use they allow or don't allow (if any) for schoolwork.



Find more in our Parent Tip Sheet Library! For more detailed information, including data sources, check out the full report: A new direction for students in an AI world: Prosper, Prepare, Protect.