

>_ type your first prompt

THE FIRST PROMPT

A Beginner's Field Guide to Living
and Building with AI

*"The most powerful tool ever built
is now in the hands of beginners.
Learn to wield it well."*

F O R A V Y A A N S H

One day, son, you will get the keys to a kind of magic I did not have growing up — a machine you can simply talk to, that can teach you anything, help you make almost anything, and do the work of a whole team. It will shape your life more than any tool of mine shaped mine.

This book is what I would sit you down and tell you about it — the wonder, the way in, and the warnings. I wrote it so it would make sense to you at ten, and to anyone, anywhere, starting from zero.

— *Your Dad*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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A boy from a small Indian town with no computer-science pedigree and no big-tech job. He taught himself to build — and in the age of AI, he built things a whole team once needed.

He built **Avya**, an AI fitness coach named after his son. He built the AI content engine that runs icanbefitter.com. He builds and sells AI agents to other businesses. None of it required permission, a degree, or deep pockets — just curiosity, the willingness to start badly, and tools that anyone reading this can open today.

That is the whole point of this book: **if an ordinary person can learn to use, tinker with, and build with AI, so can you — or your child.** He is the creator of icanbefitter.com, a platform built so his son, Ayaansh, never starts from zero.

AI BUILDER

MARINE VETERAN

SELF-TAUGHT

FOUNDER

SHIV BHAKT

THE DAY YOU GET THE KEYS

I keep imagining the day my son turns ten and I hand him real access to AI for the first time. Not a toy. The actual thing — the machine you can talk to that has read almost everything humans have ever written.

It worries me a little and it thrills me a lot. Because used one way, this tool will make him lazy, gullible, and hollow. Used another way, it will make him curious, capable, and almost unfairly powerful for his age. The difference is not the tool. It is what he understands about it. So I decided to write it all down.

Then I realised something: the guide I want for my ten-year-old is the *same* guide that the uncle who's scared of computers needs, and the college student, and the shopkeeper, and the mother who's heard of "ChatGPT" but never opened it. **Everyone is a beginner at this right now.** The technology is so new that a curious child and a working adult are standing at almost the same starting line.

So this book assumes you know nothing. Not what an "app" is, not what "the cloud" means. Every new word arrives with a simple picture before the technical name. We'll go in order, one rung at a time — first how to **use** AI, then how to **tinker** and make it yours, then how to actually **build** with it, how to turn that into real opportunity, and — just as important — how to stay safe and wise while you do.

You don't need to be technical. You need to be curious, and willing to type one first sentence. Let's type it together.

Har Har Mahadev. Let's begin. — Upen

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THE OPENING

00

WHY THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

Before the how, the why. What this tool actually is, what it will do to your life, and the one rule that decides whether it makes you sharper or duller.

CHAPTER ONE · THE OPENING

THE MOST POWERFUL TOOL EVER HANDED TO A BEGINNER

Imagine a friend who has read almost everything ever written, answers instantly in any language, and never gets tired of you asking. That friend now fits in your pocket.

Let me tell you what AI actually is, without a single confusing word.

PICTURE IT LIKE THIS

Imagine you hired a brilliant intern. This intern has read nearly every book, website, and recipe ever published. Ask anything — "explain photosynthesis to a six-year-old," "write a complaint letter," "what's wrong with my plant?" — and they answer at once, patiently, in whatever language you like. There is only one catch, and we'll come back to it often: this intern would rather give you a confident guess than admit they don't know. **That intern is today's AI.**

That's it. When people say "AI," "ChatGPT," "Gemini," or "Claude," they mean a computer program you talk to in plain language, that talks back. You don't press buttons or learn commands. You just write — or even speak — the way you'd text a knowledgeable friend.

FOR THE CURIOUS

These programs are called *large language models* (LLMs). They learned by reading enormous amounts of text and getting very, very good at predicting what words come next — a bit like the autocomplete on your phone, grown up a billion times over. They don't "know" things the way you do; they're pattern machines. That's also why they sometimes make things up.

Why this moment is different

This isn't a gadget for engineers. In a single year it became something the whole world picked up.

~280× CHEAPER

The cost of using capable AI fell about 280 times in two years. That collapse is exactly why you can use powerful AI today for free or for pocket change.

Stanford HAI AI Index, 2025

Roughly 8 in 10 organisations now use AI, and the most popular assistants each have hundreds of millions of users. For the first time in history, the most advanced tool of the age is not reserved for the rich, the trained, or the connected. **A curious child in a small town and a CEO in a tower are opening the very same window.** That has never happened before. This book is about not wasting it.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Open any free AI assistant (we'll pick one together in Chapter 4). Type one real question you have today — anything. Read the answer. That's it. You've started. The hardest step in this whole book was the first sentence, and you just took it.

Now — what does having this change about your actual life?

CHAPTER TWO · THE OPENING

HOW YOUR LIFE WILL CHANGE

AI is not here to replace you. For most people, it is a force multiplier — and it lifts the beginner highest of all.

The scary headline is "AI will take your job." The quieter truth is more interesting and far more hopeful. Across the careful studies, AI mostly *amplifies* people rather than replacing them — and it amplifies the least experienced the most.

+34%

Jump in productivity for *novice* customer-support workers using AI — versus almost no change for the experts. Across study after study, AI shrinks the gap between beginner and expert.

Brynjolfsson, Li & Raymond, NBER field study, 2023

Software developers finished tasks **56% faster** with an AI helper. Consultants did **40% higher-quality work** on suitable tasks. And in every case, the people who gained the most were the ones who started with the least. Read that twice, because it is the most encouraging fact in this book: **this tool was practically built for someone starting from zero.**

PICTURE IT LIKE THIS

For most of history, getting good at something — writing, drawing, coding, running a business — meant years of slow climbing before you could make anything good. AI doesn't remove the climb, but it gives you a powerful set of gears. A beginner with AI can now do what used to take a small team — and can get good far faster than any generation before.

What becomes possible

With this one tool you can learn almost any subject at your own pace, write and create at a level you couldn't before, make images, music, and video from a sentence, automate the boring parts of your work, and even build apps and businesses — things we'll do together later in this book. Jobs will

change, yes: studies expect a huge churn of skills this decade. But the people who thrive won't be the ones who avoided AI. They'll be the ones who learned to direct it.

AI RARELY REPLACES A PERSON. MORE OFTEN, A PERSON USING AI REPLACES A PERSON WHO ISN'T.

So the opportunity is real and it's open to you. But there's a catch — a way of using AI that quietly makes you weaker even as it makes your work look better. We have to deal with that before anything else.

CHAPTER THREE · THE OPENING

THE ONE RULE BEFORE YOU TOUCH IT

Use AI to think, not instead of thinking. Everything good about this tool, and everything dangerous, hangs on that one sentence.

Here is the most important page in this book, and it's the one most people skip. AI can make you smarter or it can quietly hollow out your mind — and which one happens depends entirely on *how* you use it. We actually have proof.

-17%

How much WORSE students scored on a later test when they'd studied with an AI that simply gave them the answers — compared to students with no AI at all. But when the AI gave only *hints*, the harm vanished.

Bastani et al., ~1,000 students, PNAS, 2025

Same AI. Opposite results. When it handed over answers, students looked productive and learned nothing — they got *worse*. When it nudged them with hints and made them do the thinking, they were fine. The lesson is not "avoid AI." It's **let AI coach your thinking, never replace it.**

PICTURE IT LIKE THIS

If a friend does all your maths homework, your marks look great — until the exam, alone, where you've learned nothing. If instead that friend asks "what do you think the first step is?" and nudges you when you're stuck, you actually get smarter. AI can play either friend. **You choose which one, every time you use it.**

So three habits, from your very first day:

- **Try first, then ask.** Attempt it yourself, then use AI to check, improve, or unstick you — not to skip the thinking.
- **Ask it to quiz you, not just tell you.** "Don't give me the answer — ask me questions until I work it out." This one sentence changes everything.

- **Always verify what matters.** AI sometimes states wrong things with total confidence (Chapter 17). Treat its answer as a smart first draft, never as final truth.

LET IT CARRY THE LOAD. NEVER LET IT CARRY YOUR JUDGMENT.

Hold that rule in your hand. Now we begin the journey for real — and it starts with your very first conversation.

LEVEL ONE

01

USE

Become brilliant at simply using AI. Most of the magic, and 90% of the value for most people, lives right here — no tinkering or building required.

YOUR FIRST CONVERSATION

There's no exam to pass and nothing to install. If you can send a message, you can use AI. Let's open the door.

There are a few main AI assistants, and as of 2026 the honest truth is they're all very good and roughly comparable — the "best" one changes every few months, so don't agonise. The big three you'll hear about:

- **ChatGPT** (by OpenAI) — the famous one; great all-rounder.
- **Claude** (by Anthropic) — strong at writing, reasoning, and careful answers.
- **Gemini** (by Google) — built into Google's apps; generous free access.

All three have a **free version** that is more than enough to start. You open a website or app, make a free account, and type into the box at the bottom. You can even tap the microphone and *talk* to it — useful if typing is slow, or for a child, or an elder.

FOR THE CURIOUS

The paid tiers (around \$20/month, as of mid-2026) unlock the smartest models and higher limits. Start free. Upgrade only once you feel the free version holding you back. In India, watch for free offers too — Google has given free Gemini to Jio users, and OpenAI gave a year of free ChatGPT in India.

How to pick? Don't, yet.

Pick whichever opens easily for you and start. You can switch any time; using one teaches you all of them, because they all work the same way — a conversation. The goal today is not the "right" choice. It's your first ten messages.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Open one assistant (if you're under 18, set it up with a parent — more on that in Chapter 21). Say hello. Then ask it three real things: something you're curious about, something you need help writing, and "explain [anything you find confusing] simply." Notice how it feels like talking to a person. That feeling is the whole revolution.

HOW TO TALK TO AI SO IT HELPS

The quality of what you get out depends on the quality of what you put in. The good news: the skill is just clear communication.

People call this "prompting," which sounds technical. It isn't. A **prompt** is simply what you say to the AI. And the secret to good prompting is the same secret as briefing any helper well: **be clear about what you want.**

THE TEST THAT NEVER FAILS

Before you send a request, ask yourself: "If I gave this exact instruction to a clever stranger who can't read my mind, would they know what to do?" If the stranger would be confused, so will the AI. Vague in, vague out. Specific in, useful out.

Three moves take you 90% of the way:

- 1 **Be clear and give context.** Not "write about dogs," but "Write a fun 100-word paragraph about why Labradors make good family pets, for my 8-year-old's school project."
- 2 **Show an example of what "good" looks like.** Paste a sample, or say "make it sound like this: ...". Examples teach faster than adjectives.
- 3 **Don't stop at the first answer — talk back.** "Shorter." "More formal." "You missed the cost — add it." It's a conversation; the second and third replies are usually the good ones.

FOR THE CURIOUS

You'll see people sell elaborate "prompt formulas" and "act as a world-class expert..." tricks. With modern models these matter far less than they used to — clear context beats clever wording. One genuinely useful habit: put your most important instruction at the *start* and repeat it at the *end*, since the middle of a long message gets the least attention.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Take a lazy request like "help me write an email." Now rewrite it with context: who it's to, what you want them to do, how long, what tone. Send both versions to the AI and watch the difference. That gap is your new superpower.

AI AS YOUR TUTOR

For thousands of years, a patient personal tutor was a luxury for kings. You now have one, on every subject, for free.

This is, to me, the most beautiful thing AI gives a curious person — and the most important for a young one. A private tutor who never runs out of patience, never makes you feel stupid for asking again, and can explain anything at exactly your level.

2× THE LEARNING

A Harvard study found students learned *more than twice* as much from a well-designed AI tutor as from an excellent interactive class — in less time. In a Nigeria program, six weeks of AI tutoring matched about two years of normal learning.

Kestin et al., Scientific Reports 2025; World Bank, 2024-25

But remember the One Rule (Chapter 3). A tutor that hands you answers makes you weaker. So you must *tell* it to teach you properly. The magic words:

COPY THIS — YOUR TUTOR PROMPT

"Be my patient tutor for [topic]. Explain it simply with everyday examples. Then ask me questions one at a time to check I understand. **Don't give me the answers** — guide me to them. Adjust to my level as we go."

Now it quizzes you, corrects you gently, and makes *you* do the thinking — which, the science says, is exactly how real learning sticks. You can learn maths, a language, history, how your car works, anything — by talking.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Pick one thing you never understood in school. Paste the tutor prompt above, fill in the topic, and let it teach you for ten minutes. Answer its questions out loud. You'll learn more than you expect — and feel the difference between being *told* and being *taught*.

EVERYDAY SUPERPOWERS

Once it's a habit, AI quietly removes friction from a dozen daily tasks. Here's the menu most people never realise is on the table.

Beyond learning, here is what you can hand to your AI intern any day of the week — by typing or by talking, and now even by showing it a photo:

- 📄 **Write anything** — emails, applications, complaints, speeches, captions, a tricky message to a relative. Draft in seconds, then polish.
- 📄 **Make the long short** — paste a contract, a report, a long article: "summarise this in 5 simple points."
- 📄 **Translate & simplify** — into any language, or "explain this legal/medical letter in plain words."
- 📄 **Show it a picture** — a photo of a rash, a broken part, a maths problem, a menu in a foreign language, leftovers in your fridge: "what is this / what can I make?"
- 📄 **Think things through** — "I have two job offers, here are the details, what should I weigh?" It won't decide for you, but it's a tireless thinking partner.

A QUIET MIRACLE

A blind person can now point a phone at the world and hear it described — "your shirt is blue," "the sign says platform 3." Tools like Be My Eyes plugged AI vision in and gave millions a new sense. AI isn't only about productivity; for some, it restores a piece of the world.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Take a photo of anything around you — a product label, a plant, a handwritten note, the inside of your fridge — and ask the AI what it is or what to do with it. Seeing it "see" is the moment most people realise this is bigger than a chatbot.

MAKE THINGS: IMAGES, VIDEO, MUSIC, VOICE

*Describe it in words, and AI draws it, films it, sings it, or speaks it.
Whole creative crafts are now open to people who can't draw a straight line.*

You no longer need to be an artist to make art, or a musician to make music. You describe what you want, and AI creates it. As of 2026, from a plain-English sentence you can make:

- ▣ **Images** — a poster, a logo, a cartoon of your dog as a superhero. Type a description; get a picture in seconds.
- ▣ **Video** — short cinematic clips, now even with sound, from a written scene.
- ▣ **Music** — a full song, with vocals, from one prompt (tools like Suno). A birthday song with your friend's name in it, in a minute.
- ▣ **Voice** — natural narration in dozens of languages; you can even make an audiobook of your own writing.

~\$80

Rough cost for an ordinary person to make a 3-minute AI short film end-to-end — script, visuals, video, voice, music — using free and cheap tools. A decade ago that was a five-figure production.

AI filmmaking cost breakdown, 2026 (tools & prices change)

FOR THE CURIOUS

Tool names here date fast — today it's the likes of Midjourney/FLUX (images), Veo/Sora/Kling/Runway (video), Suno (music), ElevenLabs (voice). By the time you read this, the names may differ; the *capability* only grows. Don't memorise tools — learn the move: describe, generate, refine.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Ask your assistant to make an image: "a friendly robot teaching a child to ride a bicycle, warm evening light, storybook style." Change three words and try again. You just directed your first piece of art.

LEVEL TWO

02

TINKER

Stop just chatting and start shaping. Make AI *yours* — give it a job, connect it to your tools, let it do repetitive work for you. Still no code required.

TEACH AI YOUR WAY

Instead of explaining yourself from scratch every time, you can set up your own custom AI once — and it remembers the job forever.

So far you've been giving fresh instructions each chat. Tinkering begins when you make a **reusable** AI — your own little specialist that already knows its job. Every major assistant lets you do this in about five minutes, with no code:

- **Gemini "Gems"** (free) and **Claude "Projects"** (free) — give it a name, instructions, and some of your own notes/files to work from.
- **Custom GPTs** — the same idea inside ChatGPT (creating one needs the paid tier; there's a public store of millions made by others).

PICTURE IT LIKE THIS

A normal chat is hiring a temp who forgets you the moment they leave. A custom AI is training a permanent assistant: you write their job description once — "You are my email assistant. My tone is warm but brief. Here are five emails I've written; match this style." — and from then on, they show up already knowing the role.

You can make one to draft in your writing voice, one to help with your kid's homework the Socratic way, one that knows your business and answers customer questions, one that turns your messy notes into clean summaries. You're not coding. You're *teaching* — in plain words.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

In Gemini or Claude, create one Gem/Project. Give it a clear job and paste in a few examples of how you like things done. Then use it twice. Feel how much better it is than starting cold each time — that's the leap from *using* to *tinkering*.

MAKE AI DO THE BORING STUFF

The real freedom isn't AI that answers when asked – it's AI that quietly does the repetitive task for you, automatically, forever.

Think of the small repetitive chores in your week: saving email attachments to a folder, posting the same update to three places, copying form responses into a list, sending a reminder every Monday. **Automation** means setting these up to happen by themselves.

PICTURE IT LIKE THIS

It works like a row of dominoes you set up once: "WHEN this happens, THEN do that." "When a customer fills my form, then add them to my list and send a welcome message." You arrange the dominoes a single time; after that, they fall on their own, day and night, without you.

You build these with friendly drag-and-connect tools — no code. The popular ones (with free tiers, as of 2026) are **Zapier**, **Make**, and **n8n**. You pick a trigger ("new email arrives"), pick an action ("save the file to Drive"), and now drop AI in the middle: "...and have AI summarise it first." Suddenly your dominoes can *think*.

FOR THE CURIOUS

Adding an AI step into an automation is how ordinary people quietly build powerful little systems — e.g., "every evening, read my day's emails, summarise what needs a reply, and draft the replies in my voice." This is the doorway to *agents*, which we meet next.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Don't build yet — just notice. Write down three boring things you repeat every week. Beside each, write "WHEN ___ THEN ___." You've just designed your first three automations. Building them later is the easy part.

AI THAT CAN ACTUALLY DO THINGS

The newest leap: AI that doesn't just tell you how — it goes and does it. Powerful, genuinely useful, and the one place you keep both hands on the wheel.

Everything so far has been AI that *talks*. The 2026 frontier is AI that *acts* — it can browse the web, click buttons, fill forms, use your apps, and complete a multi-step task on its own. The word for this is an **agent**.

PICTURE IT LIKE THIS

A normal AI is a friend who *tells* you how to book the train ticket. An agent is a friend you *hand your phone* to so they book it. Hugely useful — and obviously, you watch over their shoulder while they do it. That "watch over the shoulder" instinct is the entire safety rule for agents.

To let an agent use your actual tools — your calendar, your files, your apps — it needs a kind of universal adapter.

FOR THE CURIOUS

That adapter is called **MCP (Model Context Protocol)** — think of it as *the USB-C port for AI*: one standard plug that connects AI to thousands of tools. You don't have to build these; you just switch on ready-made connectors. It's become the industry standard, with thousands of connectors available.

Real, but keep expectations honest

Agents are improving fast but are still uneven in 2026 — only about a quarter of companies have them running at scale. They make mistakes, so the good ones pause and ask before doing anything risky (sending money, deleting things). **Use them for real tasks, but supervise — never give an agent the keys and walk away.**

LET THE AGENT DRIVE. KEEP YOUR HAND NEAR THE WHEEL.

You can now use, customise, and automate AI. That's further than most people ever get. But you came for the big one — actually *building* something. Turn the page.

LEVEL THREE

03

BUILD

The big one. Going from "I have an idea" to "I made a thing that works."
For the first time in history, you can build software without first becoming a programmer.

CHAPTER TWELVE · LEVEL THREE · BUILD

BUILD SOMETHING JUST BY DESCRIBING IT

Describe the app you want in plain English, and AI builds it while you watch. This is the part that still feels like science fiction — and it's real.

Until recently, making an app meant years of learning to code. Now you can type — "make me a simple website where I track how much water I drink each day, with a chart" — and an AI builds it, runs it, and gives you a link. People call this **vibe coding**.

PICTURE IT LIKE THIS

It's the difference between cooking a meal and ordering one. You don't need to know the recipe; you describe the dish, the kitchen makes it, and you taste it and send it back if it's not right. You supply the *idea* and the *taste*; the AI supplies the cooking.

The term was coined in early 2025 and within a year it was the Collins Dictionary Word of the Year — that's how fast this went mainstream. Tools to try (free tiers exist, as of 2026): **Lovable, Bolt, v0, and Replit** — you describe, they build and host.

\$80 MILLION

What one solo founder sold his AI app-builder for, about six months after launching it — built largely by himself. Meanwhile an 8-year-old built several working apps in an afternoon. The floor and the ceiling both moved.

Base44/Wix, 2025; documented kid builds, 2025

The honest catch — trust, then verify. AI-built apps can look finished but hide mistakes, including security holes that leak data. So: build fast, then check the work (or have AI review its own work, and don't put real passwords or sensitive data into a toy project). The magic is real; the responsibility stays yours.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Open one builder (try Lovable or Bolt). Describe one tiny, useful thing — "a page with a button that gives me a random healthy snack idea." Watch it appear. You just built software. Sit with that for a second.

WANT TO GO DEEPER? LEARN TO CODE WITH AI

You don't need to code to build anymore. But if you choose to learn, AI is the most patient programming teacher who ever lived.

Vibe coding gets you far. But understanding a little real code lets you fix things, build bigger, and know what the AI is actually doing. The wonderful news: you no longer learn to code from dry textbooks — you learn *with* an AI tutor sitting beside you, explaining every line.

Start with **Python**. It reads almost like English, it's the language of AI itself, and it's the friendliest first language there is. Ask your AI tutor: *"Teach me Python from absolute zero, one tiny concept at a time, with a small exercise after each. Don't move on until I've done it."*

THE ONE TRAP TO AVOID — "SPECTATOR MODE"

It's tempting to let AI write all the code while you just watch and paste. That's like watching cooking videos and believing you can cook. You learn by **typing it yourself**, breaking it, and fixing it. Use AI to explain and unstick you — not to do it for you. (Remember the One Rule.)

6–9 MONTHS

The extra learning progress students gained from an AI coding tutor in one study — the kind of jump a good human tutor delivers. A patient teacher, available at 2 a.m., for free.

UPenn AI tutoring study (illustrative)

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Ask your AI: "Give me the smallest possible first Python program and tell me, step by step, how to run it for free in the browser (try replit.com or Google Colab)." Type it yourself. Make it print your name. That's the first brick.

YOUR FIRST REAL PROJECT

Skills don't stick until you build something you actually care about. Here's how to choose it, and the ladder to climb.

Tutorials are training wheels; a real project is the bicycle. The trick is to **build something that solves a small, real problem in your own life** — because then you'll care enough to finish it, and finishing is where the learning lives.

PICTURE IT LIKE THIS

Don't try to build the whole house on day one. Build one good room. A finished tiny thing teaches you more than a half-built grand thing — and it gives you the most underrated fuel in the world: the feeling of "I made that, and it works."

A gentle ladder, each rung using what you learned before:

- 1 Solve one annoyance with a single good prompt (e.g., a weekly meal plan for your family's tastes).
- 2 Turn it into a reusable custom AI (a Gem/Project) you use every week.
- 3 Automate one repetitive chore end-to-end.
- 4 Vibe-code one tiny app you'd actually use.
- 5 Add a little real code to make it yours.
- 6 Show it to one other person — and improve it from what they say.

DON'T LEARN AI AND THEN BUILD. BUILD, AND YOU'LL LEARN AI ON THE WAY.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Finish this sentence: "Something small that annoys me or that I wish existed is _____." That's your first project. Write it on a sticky note. You now have a destination — everything in this book is just the road to it.

LEVEL FOUR

04

LEVERAGE

Turn a skill into a life. How real people use AI to earn and create opportunity — and how to tell the honest paths from the cons.

USING AI TO EARN — HONESTLY

AI really can help you earn — as a tool that makes your work better and faster. It cannot make you money while you sleep, and anyone promising that is selling something.

This is the chapter the internet lies about most, so I'll be straight with you. AI is a genuine income lever — people use it to freelance, to offer services, to build small products, to do more and better work in less time. Skilled people who use AI well are measurably more in demand and better paid than those who don't.

Honest ways in: offer a service you can now do faster (writing, design, simple websites, social content, translation, tutoring); build a tiny tool or app people will pay a little for; or use AI to do your existing job so well you become the person who can't be done without.

THE HONEST NUMBERS (so you're not conned)

A realistic beginner earns maybe a few hundred to a thousand a month within the first six months of real effort — **not** the "\$300 a day, no work" of the thumbnails. It's earned, like anything. The skill pays; the shortcut doesn't.

SCAM RED-FLAGS — MEMORISE THESE

Walk away from anything that promises **guaranteed returns**, "**passive income with no effort**," or a **Rs /\$ expensive "AI secrets" course** to unlock it. Real regulators (like the US FTC) have shut down a wave of these "AI money" scams. If it sounds like free money, you are the product.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Write down one skill you already have or could offer, and ask AI: "How could I use AI to do [this] faster or better for people, and how would a beginner find their first small client — honestly?" Read it as a starting map, not a get-rich button.

THE SKILLS THAT WIN IN AN AI WORLD

When AI can do so much, what's left for humans? The most valuable things of all — and they're skills anyone can grow.

If AI can write, code, and create, a fair question is: what should a person — what should my son — actually get good at? The answer is reassuring. As AI handles more of the *doing*, the human skills that decide and direct become worth *more*, not less.

- **Judgment & taste** — knowing what's good, what's true, what's worth making. AI gives you ten options; you pick the right one.
- **Asking good questions** — the whole game becomes knowing what to ask. Curiosity is now a superpower, not a distraction.
- **Verification** — checking whether something is actually true. In a world of confident machines and fakes, this is gold.
- **Agency** — the habit of starting, deciding, and finishing without being told. AI rewards self-starters enormously.
- **The human things** — kindness, leadership, real relationships, creativity with a point of view. AI can't be *you*.
- **Learning how to learn** — because the tools will keep changing. The person who can pick up new things fast always wins.

DON'T COMPETE WITH AI AT DOING. GET GREAT AT DECIDING, DIRECTING, AND DISCERNING. THAT'S THE HUMAN LAYER — AND IT'S WHERE THE VALUE MOVES.

That's the opportunity side of the journey. Now the part a good father refuses to skip — the warnings. Because a powerful tool in unwise hands hurts the person holding it.

LEVEL FIVE

05

WISDOM

The most important level, and the one the hype skips. How to use this power safely, honestly, and in a way that keeps you — and your kids — whole.

WHEN AI LIES

AI will sometimes tell you something completely false with total confidence. This isn't a rare glitch — it's how it works. Knowing this protects you for life.

Remember our intern who'd rather guess than admit they don't know? When AI states a wrong fact, a fake quote, a book or court case that never existed — all with perfect confidence — it's called a **hallucination**. It is not lying on purpose; it's a pattern-machine filling the gap with something plausible.

1,348

Real court cases (and counting) where lawyers were caught submitting AI-invented, fake legal citations. A US judge fined one \$110,000. These were professionals who forgot to check.

AI hallucination case tracker, 2026

So adopt the rule that protects you forever:

THE FIRST-DRAFT RULE

Treat everything AI tells you as a **confident first draft, never the final truth**. For anything that matters — health, money, facts you'll repeat, names, numbers, history — verify it with a real source before you trust or share it. The smarter AI gets, the easier it is to forget this. Don't.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Ask AI for "three facts about my town's history with sources." Then actually check one. Sometimes it's spot-on; sometimes it invents a source. Catching it once teaches you to never fully trust it again — which is exactly the right relationship.

STAYING SAFE WITH AI

The same power that helps you can be turned against you. A handful of simple habits keep you and your family safe.

Guard your secrets. Whatever you type into AI may be stored and even used to train it (you can often turn this off in settings). So never paste passwords, bank details, your home address, or other people's private information into a chatbot. For a child the rule is simpler: *don't tell the AI anything you wouldn't tell a stranger.*

Beware fakes — this is the big new danger. AI can now clone a voice from a few seconds of audio and fake a video call. Scammers use this to imitate a panicked relative or a boss asking for money.

3 SECONDS

Of audio is now enough to clone a voice convincingly. One company was tricked out of \$25 million by a deepfake video call of its "executives."

McAfee; reported deepfake fraud cases, 2024-26

THE FAMILY SAFE WORD

Agree on a secret word with your family today. If a "relative" ever calls or messages in a panic asking for money or urgent help, ask for the word — or hang up and call them back on their real number. This one habit defeats the most common AI scam there is.

AI can be biased. It learned from human writing, so it can quietly carry human prejudices. Keep a critical eye; it is confident, not neutral.

And the gentlest warning, especially for the young: AI can feel like a friend who's always there. It isn't one. Lonely, struggling teens have been genuinely harmed leaning on AI "companions" for real emotional support. **AI is a tool, not a friend or a therapist.** For real feelings, go to real people — a parent, a friend, a teacher, a professional.

FOR THE CURIOUS – THE RULES FOR KIDS

The main AI tools officially require users to be **13+**, and under-18s need a parent's permission. A 10-year-old should use AI on a **parent's account, with the parent nearby** — which is exactly what the next chapters are about. Parental controls now exist; turn them on.

BUILD LIKE A GOOD HUMAN

Having power means choosing how to use it. A few principles to keep your conscience as sharp as your skills.

This is the part I most want my son to absorb, because character outlasts any tool. Using AI well isn't only about results — it's about being someone you respect while you do it.

- ❑ **Don't pass AI's work off as fully your own.** Using AI to help is fine and smart. Submitting an AI essay as if you wrote and understood it is cheating — mostly of yourself. At school and work, be honest that AI helped.
- ❑ **Know that AI-only work isn't really yours.** In law, something a machine made with no human creativity can't even be owned/copyrighted. Your ideas, choices, and effort are what make a thing *yours*.
- ❑ **Don't build things that harm.** The power to make is the power to mislead. Don't make fakes to deceive, content to bully, or tools to cheat people. Build things you'd be proud to put your name on.
- ❑ **Keep your own mind alive.** Read, think, struggle with hard things without AI sometimes. A sharp mind is the one thing AI can't give you — and the thing that makes you good *with* AI.

LET AI MAKE YOU MORE CAPABLE. NEVER LET IT MAKE YOU LESS HONEST, LESS KIND, OR LESS YOU.

That's the whole climb — use, tinker, build, leverage, and the wisdom to hold it all well. Two last things before I let you go: the billion people just now getting access, and the young ones who'll grow up never knowing a world without it.

THE NEXT BILLION & THE NEXT GENERATION

06

PASSING IT ON

Two groups this matters to most: the billion people just getting access in their own language, and the children who'll never remember a world without AI.

CHAPTER TWENTY · THE NEXT BILLION

AI IN YOUR LANGUAGE

For most of computing's history, you had to come to the machine in English. Now the machine comes to you, in your mother tongue, often for free.

If English has been a wall between you and technology, that wall is falling. Modern AI speaks and understands dozens of languages, and you can simply talk to it — no typing, no English required.

36+ LANGUAGES

Supported by India's national language AI platform (Bhashini), with voice in many of them. A farmer can now ask a question by voice, in their own language, and get an answer — no reading or typing needed.

Bhashini / India AI, 2025-26

And access is getting cheaper or free: in India, free Gemini reached hundreds of millions of phone users, and free ChatGPT was offered nationwide. Around the world, capable AI now runs even on modest phones.

WHY THIS IS HUGE

Imagine the smartest tutor, doctor's-helper, and form-filler in the world — but they only spoke a language you didn't, and charged by the hour. Now imagine they speak *your* language, listen to your voice, and work for free. For hundreds of millions of people, that's not the future. That's this year.

One honest note: a real gap still exists — fast internet and devices aren't everywhere, and most of the best content is still in English. That gap is itself an **opportunity**: the person who builds the next great tool in Hindi, Tamil, Bhojpuri, or any underserved tongue is building for a billion people. Maybe that person is you.

TRY THIS RIGHT NOW

Switch the AI to your most comfortable language — or just start typing/speaking in it. Ask it something.
Most people are stunned the first time the machine answers warmly in their own mother tongue.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE · THE NEXT GENERATION

FOR PARENTS & KIDS

How a young person can grow up powerful with AI — and safe. This is the chapter I wrote first in my heart, because it's for my own son.

If you're a parent, the goal isn't to keep AI away from your child — that's like banning the internet in 2005. The goal is to raise a child who **directs** AI rather than being dulled or fooled by it. Here's the honest playbook.

Use it together, on your account. The main tools are officially 13+, and a young child should use AI sitting beside a parent, on a parent-owned account with parental controls on. Make it a shared adventure, not a solo screen.

Insist on the One Rule. Teach them from day one to use AI to *think*, not to copy. The hint-not-answers habit (Chapter 6) is the single most important thing you can give an AI-native kid. A child who uses AI to skip thinking will fall behind; one who uses it to learn faster will fly.

A ladder for young builders

Children can climb toward real building in age-friendly steps — most are free:

- 1 **Scratch** (about 8+) — drag-and-drop blocks to make games and stories. The classic, joyful first step into "I made it do something."
- 2 **Machine Learning for Kids & Google's Teachable Machine** — train a simple AI to recognise pictures or sounds, in minutes. They see how AI learns.
- 3 **MIT App Inventor** — build a real phone app with blocks.
- 4 **Khanmigo** (Khan Academy's AI tutor) — a safe, Socratic tutor built for kids that won't just hand over answers.
- 5 **Then Python** (around 12–13+) — real code, learned with an AI tutor, as in Chapter 13.

Protect the off-switch. Curiosity, boredom, play, real friends, sport, sleep — these build the very judgment and creativity that make a person good *with* AI. Screens and AI are a tool in a full life, not the life itself.

RAISE A CHILD WHO POINTS THE TOOL — NOT ONE THE TOOL POINTS AROUND.

- - - A Letter to My Son - - -

To Avyaansh, On the Future

By the time you really read this, the tools in this book will look quaint — the way my first slow computer looks to you now. The specific names won't matter. But what I want you to carry from it will not have aged a day.

You are growing up with a power no generation before you has held: a machine that can teach you anything and help you make almost anything. It would have felt like magic to me as a boy in a small town with no one to show me the way. I want it to feel like *air* to you — ordinary, always there, yours.

But hear me, son: a tool that can think for you is also a tool that can stop you from thinking. Use it to sharpen your mind, never to skip it. Stay curious. Stay honest. Verify what matters. And keep some hours that are just you and a hard problem and no help — because that is where you become someone.

Build things. Build them for people, not just for money. Make the thing that helps your grandmother, or the kid in a village who has no one to show *him* the way. The whole reason I built any of this — the platform, the apps, this little book — was so you would never start from zero. Now you don't have to. So go further than I did. That was always the point.








And whatever you build, whatever you become — be kind, and come home for dinner.

— Your Dad 🍷

PUT IT TO WORK

YOUR FIRST 7 DAYS WITH AI

One small step a day. By the end of the week you'll have done what most people never do — actually started.

-  **Day 1 — Open the door.** Make a free account on one assistant. Ask it three real questions. Try the voice button.
-  **Day 2 — Brief it well.** Take one task and write a clear, detailed prompt with context and an example.
-  **Day 3 — Learn something.** Use the tutor prompt; let AI quiz you on a topic for ten minutes. Don't accept answers — earn them.
-  **Day 4 — Make something.** Generate an image, a short song, or a piece of writing. Play.
-  **Day 5 — Make it yours.** Create one custom AI (a Gem/Project) with a clear job and your examples.
-  **Day 6 — Build a tiny thing.** Describe one small app in a vibe-coding tool and watch it appear.
-  **Day 7 — Get safe & wise.** Turn on privacy settings, agree a family safe word, and verify one thing AI told you this week.

That's the whole journey in miniature: use, tinker, build, and stay wise. Repeat it on bigger things for the rest of your life.

APPENDIX · TOOLS

THE STARTER TOOLKIT

*A short, curated map of where to start – by what you want to do.
Names and prices change fast; the categories don't.*

TO...	TRY (AS OF MID-2026)	FREE?
Chat / learn / write	ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini	Yes
Make your own AI	Gemini Gems, Claude Projects, Custom GPTs	Mostly
Automate boring tasks	Make, Zapier, n8n	Free tiers
Build an app by describing	Lovable, Bolt, v0, Replit	Free tiers
Write real code with AI	Cursor, Claude Code, GitHub Copilot	Some free
Make images	Midjourney, FLUX, in-chat image tools	Some free
Make video	Veo, Sora, Kling, Runway	Limited free
Make music / voice	Suno (music), ElevenLabs (voice)	Free tiers
Learn to code (kid-safe tutor)	Khanmigo	~low cost
Kids: first building	Scratch, Teachable Machine, MIT App Inventor	Yes

Tools and prices change monthly – treat this as a starting map, not a fixed list. Pick one per row and begin.

The Rs 0 / \$0 path is real: a free assistant + a free vibe-coding tier + free kid tools is enough to go from your first prompt to your first app without paying anything. A phone is fine for using AI; a basic laptop or Chromebook is the practical minimum for building.

APPENDIX · PROMPTS

THE PROMPT CHEAT-SHEET

Seven reusable patterns that cover most of what beginners need. Copy, fill in the blanks, keep them handy.

- **The Tutor** — "Be my patient tutor for [topic]. Explain simply, then quiz me one question at a time. Don't give answers — guide me to them."
- **The Brief** — "Task: [what]. For: [audience]. Tone: [how]. Length: [how long]. Example of good: [paste]. Now do it."
- **The Explainer** — "Explain [thing] like I'm 12, with one everyday example."
- **The Critic** — "Here's my [work]. Give me 3 honest weaknesses and exactly how to fix each."
- **The Summariser** — "Summarise this in 5 simple points, then one sentence a child would understand."
- **The Decision Partner** — "Here are my options and what I care about. Lay out the trade-offs. Don't decide for me."
- **The Verifier** — "Give me sources I can check, and flag anything you're unsure about or might be making up."

REFERENCE

GLOSSARY

AI / LLM — the program you talk to; a "large language model" that learned by reading huge amounts of text and predicting words. A brilliant intern who's read everything.

Prompt — what you say to the AI. Better prompt, better answer.

Token — the little pieces of words AI reads and writes in. Mostly matters for limits and pricing.

Context window — how much the AI can hold "in its head" at once. Bigger window = it remembers more of your conversation/documents.

Hallucination — when AI states something false with confidence. Always verify what matters.

Agent — AI that doesn't just talk but takes actions (clicks, browses, uses apps). Supervise it.

MCP — the "USB-C port for AI": a standard way to plug AI into your tools and data.

Multimodal — AI that handles more than text: images, voice, video.

Vibe coding — building software by describing it in plain English and letting AI write the code.

Open-weight model — an AI you can download and run yourself, often free, even offline.

Fine-tuning — further training a model on specific examples so it specialises. (Most beginners never need this — custom AIs and good prompts go a long way.)

YOUR NEXT STEP

MEET AVYA

This whole book is proof of its own promise: an ordinary, self-taught person built real AI products. Here's one of them.

I didn't just write about building with AI — I build with it. **Avya** is an AI coach I made, named after my son. The content engine behind icanbefitter.com is one I built. The AI agents I create for businesses are real work, real income. None of it needed a big-tech badge — only the willingness to start and the habits in this book.

I tell you this not to impress you but to *derisk* it for you: the distance from "I read a book about AI" to "I built something with AI" is far shorter than you think. You just read the map. Now take the first 7 days, then the next, then build the thing on your sticky note.

START HERE

Open one AI assistant and run your First 7 Days. When you're ready to go further — to learn building, or to see what an ordinary person can ship — come find the Technically writing and tools at icanbefitter.com. The map is yours. The walking is the fun part.

GO DEEPER

GOING FURTHER

A few durable places to keep learning, after the names of today's tools have changed.

Co-Intelligence — Ethan Mollick. The best plain-English book on living and working with AI; the "always invite AI to the table, but know its jagged edges" mindset.

Andrej Karpathy's intro talks (free, online) — a clear, friendly explanation of how these models actually work, from one of the field's best teachers.

The makers' own guides — OpenAI, Anthropic, and Google publish free, beginner-friendly help and prompting docs. Go to the source.

Khan Academy & Khanmigo — for learners of any age to study almost anything with an AI tutor, the right way.

Your own curiosity — honestly the best teacher here is use. Ask AI to teach you about AI. It's surprisingly good at it.

A note on this book. The First Prompt is an introduction and one builder's hard-won experience — not professional, legal, financial, or safety advice. AI changes monthly: the tools, models, prices, and free tiers named here are examples "as of mid-2026" and will shift — always check the current version and the provider's own rules. Verify important facts independently; AI can be confidently wrong. The main tools require users to be 13+ and under-18s need a parent's consent — please follow them. Build, and use, responsibly.

HAR HAR MAHADEV 🙏

Now close this book and open a blank chat. Type your first prompt. — Your Dad, for Avyaansh, and for you.