

AI for the Rest of Us

Building practical AI literacy without a computer science degree.

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LET'S START WITH YOU

How are we **actually** feeling about AI?

Two quick anonymous questions — your phones, right now.



Go to [Slido.com](https://www.slido.com) · Event Code #EDU

QUESTION 1

How comfortable are you with AI tools today?

Scale of 1 (“never touched them”) to 5 (“daily”).

QUESTION 2

What’s your single biggest concern?

One word or phrase. We’ll watch the cloud build live.

You already have the **cognitive equipment**.

AI is a blurry boundary you can bring into focus using the technology, logic, and language skills you already use every day.

THE GOAL

Amplify existing skills and knowledge.

Arguably more than any individual technology before, AI can act as a multiplier to what you already understand and excel at.

THE ANALOGY

The iPhone you only use for email.

You were handed the most capable device of your life... and shown only email and Candy Crush. Nobody mentioned the App Store even exists.

THE FORMAT

Better than a typing exercise.

Rather than have everyone run demos in whatever AI they have access to, let's work through the underpinnings and root value in understanding.

The cornerstone.

01

Curiosity

The willingness to just try.

02

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03

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04

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05

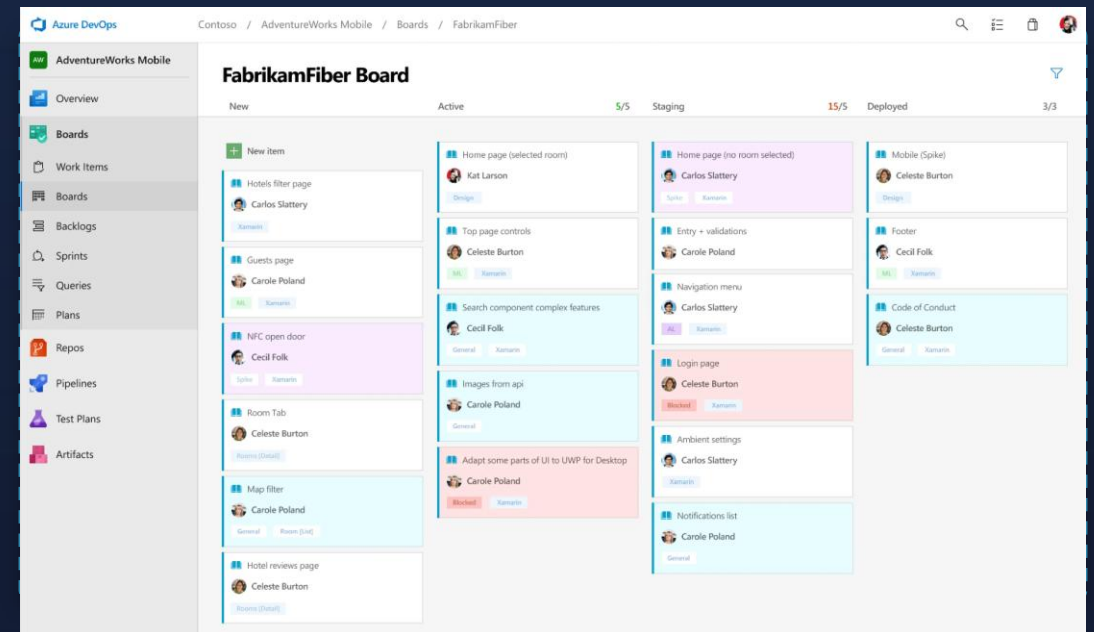
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EVERYTHING STARTS SOMEWHERE

One small experiment.

As a new release train engineer, I noticed developers hated writing user stories. So I asked a question that's probably antithetical to the being a good RTE: do developers *need* to write user stories?

That one experiment opened the door to leading AI deployment for 10,000 users across healthcare, higher ed, life sciences, financial services, and more. I had domain credentials in none of them.

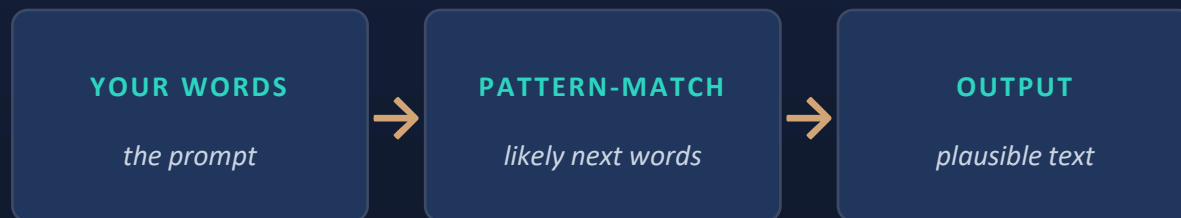


Domain expertise wasn't the gate.
Curiosity was.

WHAT THESE TOOLS ACTUALLY ARE

Autocomplete **on steroids.**

A large language model is a pattern-completion engine. Trained on enormous amounts of text, it predicts the statistically likely next words, given everything that came before. That's it. No understanding, no intent — a very well-read intern who has never lived in the world.



WHAT THAT MEANS FOR YOU

**Excellent at form. Plausible at content.
Unreliable at facts — unless grounded.**

- **Form** — structure, tone, phrasing: outstanding.
- **Content** — ideas, framing: plausible, sometimes right.
- **Facts** — names, numbers, citations: check everything.

THREE WIDELY HELD FEARS

My honest takes.

These concerns are completely valid, and also *not* an exhaustive list. They're a good place to start.

FEAR 01 · REPLACEMENT

AI replaces tasks, not roles.

There absolutely *will* be people and organizations that make the mistake of trying to replace people with AI, but they're racing to the bottom line of today's minimum expectations, 'building faster horses' when they could be innovating a better future.

FEAR 02 · INTEGRITY

AI doesn't trump experience.

No matter how skilled your prompting or advanced your AI, nothing replaces actual learning and practice. Attempting otherwise will, inevitably, backfire. We're in a transitionary period where prior methods of trust and verification need to grow and evolve.

FEAR 03 · CONNECTION

AI clears out busywork.

AI can be used to so efficient that it feels wasteful not to try and do more. Multiple surveys validate that workers across industries feel more burnt out because of AI acceleration. Used well, though, we can learn to do *better* instead of *more*, leaving more space to be human.

EXERCISE 1

Drafting & Refining

*Three ordinary tasks. Watch what the tools do well, what they don't — and the **principle** that makes the difference.*

The first output is a **starting line**.



PRE-RECORDED DEMO · CONVERSATION

A quick example of using Claude to have a brief back-and-forth conversation, the core foundation of everything else we're building today.

MORE THAN A SEARCH BOX

Rome wasn't built in a single prompt.

- "Change this."
- "Give me three alternatives."
- "Make it warmer / shorter / firmer."

The first output is a starting point, not the finish line. The conversational steering is the skill.

Ask for an answer. Then ask it to **tear it up**.

PROMPT 1 · THE CONFIDENT FIRST DRAFT

“As an experienced marketing director, give me a week-long campaign to encourage AI adoption.”

Polished. Confident. Has inevitable blind spots, like any role.

PROMPT 2 · THE BRUTAL SELF-CRITIQUE

“As the intern who has to make and deploy this, give me an unfiltered opinion of the worst parts and what you know won’t land.”

Same model, same task — a distinctly new angle and context.

The move: ask AI for an answer, then ask it to critique itself brutally. No ego.

Even stratified organizations reorganize around **whoever is actually learning.**

A managing director rearranged his schedule around an analyst's — just to ask more follow-up questions about something that mattered to both of them.

Stay focused.

01

Curiosity

The willingness to just try.

02

Humility

Let the work get torn up: yours, or the AI's.

03

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04

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05

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EXERCISE 2

Summarizing & Synthesizing

*Taking something big and making it smaller — and learning where **not** to trust it.*

A summary is a guidance to read details more effectively.



PRE-RECORDED DEMO · SUMMARIES

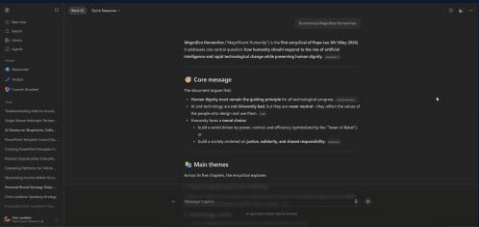
AI summarizes the Magnifica Humanitas, showcasing the wide variety of what a “summary” can mean. We see a quick showcase of the strengths and weaknesses of summarization and how to account for them.

TAILOR YOUR RESULTS

One summary does *not* fit all.

- “Create an executive summary of this data.”
- “Outline the major themes from this presentation.”
- “Cite the pages that reference AI and their context.”

AI summaries are starting points for reading more carefully. The level of detail and structure depends on your goals.



Make AI push deeper with **confidence** calibration.

THE PROMPT

“Give me 5 ways a university could begin responding to Magnifica Humanitas this coming year, with at least 2 reasons for each. Then evaluate each option and its reasoning, and assign a confidence value out of 10 against these criteria: realistic to implement this school year, fits our mission and charism, and burden on teachers.”

Just telling an AI to “give the best answers” doesn’t guarantee success. But requiring an internal validation and structured defense of that result nudges AI towards more cohesive, validated answers to better inform continued conversation.



OUTPUT · CONFIDENCE TABLE

Numbered options, the reasoning for each, and self-scored confidence values (x / 10) against the named criteria — visible on screen at the end of the clip.



Aim for the **pain**, not the **pride**.

We recruited the skeptics — the IT admins who loudly didn't get the hype — and aimed Copilot at the painful task (the diplomatic three-paragraph email), not the proud one. A known skeptic's grudging "okay, this actually helped" travels farther than any enthusiast's rave.



It's adding up.

01

Curiosity

The willingness to just try.

02

Humility

Let the work get torn up: yours, or the AI's.

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Skepticism

Trust no first pass. AI isn't the answer to everything.

04

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05

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EXERCISE 3

Brainstorming & Structuring

*Sometimes the better output isn't more AI thinking — it's better **human** thinking the AI helped you find.*

Let AI prompt **you**.

THIN

“Help me brainstorm ideas for [a syllabus unit / an event / a program plan].”

AI does the thinking. You get its ideas.

MINDFUL

“Ask me 5–7 questions that will help me figure out what I actually think about [task]. Then organize my answers into a structure I can use.”

You do the thinking. AI provides support.

AI is great at averages and conventional knowledge. Let it use that battle-tested baseline to shore up your unique angle, specific constraints, and other creative additions.

Assign it a **role**, not just a task.

THE PROMPT

“You are my tutor on [topic]. You can hint, guide, teach, and call out wrong answers — but never give me the right answer directly. If I ask for it, redirect me to think it through.”

THE MOVE

Mindful intent over functional demand.

Explicit role assignment shapes the kind of engagement — not just the content.

In the clip, the AI refuses to short-circuit the learner: asked for the answer, it redirects.

The educare echo: AI’s best job is to draw out what’s already in you, not replace it.

Living across four-plus platforms, **on purpose.**

I'm in AI tools all day, every day. Two disciplines keep it real — and keep me sharp instead of just busy.

DISCIPLINE 01

Protected time to keep skills sharp.

From Aristotle to Rerum Novarum to Magnifica Humanitas, one thread holds: work polished for its own sake is a mark of human dignity, not a waste of capacity. AI's gift of time is an invitation to reclaim whatever parts of your craft you deem important.

DISCIPLINE 02

Make AI prompt me back.

Whether it's Socratic brainstorming, helpful tutoring, or confidence testing in real time, AI makes the ultimate sounding board for my *own* creativity and capabilities.

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Stay present to your own thinking.

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—

MOVEMENT 3

Discernment & Synthesis

*The most important judgment isn't how to use AI — it's **when not to.***

Three questions for **any** task.

Distinct from skepticism— a way to surface the tradeoff so you can name it consciously.

01 · ACCURACY

How high are the stakes if it's subtly wrong?

A misremembered name in a draft email is cheap. A wrong figure in a board report is not. Match the checking to the cost.

02 · SENSITIVITY

What's in the content — and where is it going?

Student records, personnel matters, anything confidential. Know the tool, the tier, and where your words travel.

03 · HUMAN JUDGMENT

What's the value of you doing the thinking?

Sometimes the thinking is the point — formation, discernment, care. Doing it yourself isn't inefficiency. It's the work.

LOOKING FORWARD, TOGETHER

By the user, for the user.

I pre-recruited a handful of users to share unpolished tips — 45 minutes of “here’s what I actually do,” plus 15 minutes of breakout Q&A. Session 1 was trying to herd cats to get commitments and excitement. By Session 2 there was a queue of presenters waiting. Lowering the bar to “just like me” use cases catapulted engagement.

WHY NO DEMO HERE

Collaboration is a booming frontier.

The tools to link and co-edit AI work across many people are evolving every month by month. Pinning it to one demo would shrink it.

The principle is the willingness to share the tool, share the knowledge, and stay in the conversation as the frontier moves.

Five principles, discovered.

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Collaboration

Share the tool. Stay in the conversation.

How the five fit together.



CURIOSITY + HUMILITY

The approach principle.

How you walk up to something new: willing to try, willing to be wrong. The way in.



SKEPTICISM + MINDFULNESS

Deliberate practice.

How you work once you're in: take nothing for granted, stay present to your own thinking.



COLLABORATION

The connective tissue.

What carries all of it beyond you — into a team, a department, an institution.

THE PART THAT GETS LEFT OUT

Choosing **not** to use AI is also a literate choice.

Leave committed to using AI more: a fine outcome.

Leave committed to using it less, or differently, or only for specific things: **also** a fine outcome.

Choosing not to use AI for a given task is as principled as choosing to adopt it — especially for work that centers human dignity, formation, and ethical responsibility.

Let's keep the conversation going.

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Catholic Education and Artificial Intelligence · University of Portland

"People-First AI at All Scales"

Q&A — and the conversation continues in the hallway.



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