AI Tools in 2026: What They Are and How to Use Them

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1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly used to support learning, communication, research, and professional work. AI tools can help users explain concepts, organise information, prepare written material, analyse data, and develop computer programs.

Effective use requires more than entering a question. Users must understand the purpose of a tool, provide clear instructions, and evaluate its responses. AI-generated content may appear convincing even when it contains errors.

This study material introduces major categories of AI tools, their practical applications, useful commands, and the challenges associated with responsible use.

2. What Will We Cover?

The following topics will be discussed:

- Meaning and purpose of AI tools.
- General-purpose AI assistants.
- AI tools for coding and creative work.
- Applications in education and other fields.
- Writing effective prompts.
- Useful slash commands.
- Challenges, limitations, and responsible practices.

Learning Objectives

After studying this material, learners should be able to:

- Identify different categories of AI tools.
- Select a suitable tool for a given task.
- Write clear and purposeful instructions.
- Explain why AI-generated content requires verification.
- Apply basic principles of privacy, academic integrity, and responsible use.

3. What Are AI Tools?

AI tools are software applications that use artificial intelligence to perform or assist with tasks such as understanding language, recognising patterns, generating content, and analysing information.

Generative AI refers to systems that produce content, including text, images, audio, video, and computer code, in response to instructions.

Three terms are useful:

- **Model:** The underlying AI system that processes information and generates responses.

- **Assistant or application:** The interface through which a person uses an AI model.
- **Agent:** A system that can use available tools to carry out several steps towards a goal, within its permissions.

A single application may provide access to multiple models. Its capabilities may also depend on the subscription, connected services, and enabled features.

4. What Is Changing in AI Use?

AI use is expanding beyond simple question-and-answer conversations. Some tools can work with documents, interpret images, edit project files, and perform tasks through connected applications.

For example, coding agents such as Codex and Cursor can inspect project content, edit files, and run development tools. Their actions depend on the working environment and available permissions.

These developments make it increasingly important to understand:

- What information a tool can access.
- What actions it is allowed to perform.
- Whether its output is accurate and suitable.
- Which decisions require human review.

Study note: Model names, release dates, and feature availability change frequently. This material focuses on practical understanding rather than a fixed list of "latest" versions.

5. General-Purpose AI Assistants

5.1 ChatGPT

ChatGPT is an AI assistant from OpenAI. It can support activities such as explaining concepts, drafting content, and working on tasks involving code and research. Available models and capabilities differ across supported interfaces.

Example educational prompt:

> *Explain the water cycle for Class VI students in simple English. Include an everyday example and five questions to check understanding.*

5.2 Claude

Claude is an AI assistant from Anthropic. It can support writing, research, analysis, and related tasks.

Example educational prompt:

> *Read the passage provided below. Identify its main argument, summarise the supporting points, and prepare three discussion questions. Use only information from the passage.*

5.3 Gemini

Gemini is Google's AI assistant. It supports activities such as writing, brainstorming, and learning. With supported connections enabled, it can also help users find and summarise information from Google Workspace services, including Gmail, Docs, and Drive.

Example educational prompt:

> *Prepare an outline for a lesson on environmental conservation. Include learning objectives, a classroom activity, and assessment questions.*

6. AI Tools for Coding

Coding assistants help users understand, develop, and modify computer programs.

Examples include:

- **Claude Code:** Supports coding work and project workflows through an interactive development environment.
- **Codex:** Can explore a codebase, edit files, and run local development tools.
- **Cursor:** Provides an agent that can edit code and execute terminal commands.

How to Use Coding Tools Effectively

1. Describe the intended behaviour clearly.
2. Identify the relevant files or project.
3. State any requirements or restrictions.
4. Review the proposed changes.
5. Test whether the program behaves as expected.

Example prompt:

> *Create a simple quiz with five multiple-choice questions. Display the score after submission and explain how the answer-checking code works.*

Key consideration: A program that runs successfully may still contain logical errors or security weaknesses. Generated code requires review and testing.

7. AI Tools for Creative Work

Generative AI can support the creation of illustrations, visual concepts, narration, and other learning resources.

For example, Midjourney can generate images from written descriptions. Its Describe feature can suggest prompts based on an uploaded image.

Writing a Creative Prompt

A useful creative prompt specifies:

- **Subject:** What should appear?
- **Setting:** Where should it appear?
- **Style:** What visual treatment is required?
- **Composition:** How should the elements be arranged?
- **Purpose:** Who will use the output?

Example prompt:

> *Create an educational illustration of rainwater harvesting in a school. Show a roof, collection pipe, filter, and storage tank. Use a clear textbook style suitable for middle-school students.*

Check generated visuals carefully, particularly labels, scientific details, and representations of real people. Obtain appropriate permission for using someone's likeness or voice, and check applicable usage terms before publication.

8. Where Can AI Tools Be Used?

Field	Illustrative applications	Human review required
Education	Lesson outlines, explanations, practice questions	Accuracy, curriculum alignment, age suitability
Office administration	Draft reports, summaries, document organisation	Names, dates, figures, official wording
Software development	Code explanation, debugging, test preparation	Correctness, security, intended behaviour
Research	Summarising supplied papers, comparing arguments	Original sources, citations, interpretation
Marketing	Draft copy, visual concepts, campaign ideas	Factual claims, originality, audience suitability
Healthcare administration	Drafting administrative text and organising authorised records	Professional review and confidentiality

These are examples of assisted work. Responsibility for the final output remains with the person or institution using it.

9. How to Write an Effective Prompt

A **prompt** is an instruction or question given to an AI tool. Clear prompts reduce ambiguity and make responses easier to evaluate.

A practical structure is:

Task + Context + Audience + Output Format + Constraints

Example:

> *Prepare a 300-word explanation of cyber hygiene for secondary-school students. Use simple English, clear headings, and five safety practices. Include one classroom activity. Do not include statistics unless a verifiable source is provided.*

Improve the response through follow-up instructions such as:

- "Simplify the language."
- "Use only the attached passage."
- "Separate confirmed facts from assumptions."
- "Identify information that is missing."
- "Check the calculations and show the steps."

Asking an AI tool to check its own answer can help identify problems, but it does not replace independent verification.

10. Useful Slash Commands

Slash commands begin with / and trigger functions within a particular tool. They are not universal.

Claude Code

Command	Purpose
/help	Displays help and available guidance
/clear	Clears the current conversation context
/compact	Summarises the conversation to reduce context usage
/model	Selects or changes the model
/init	Generates a starter CLAUDE.md file containing project guidance

Typing / displays the commands available in the current session.

Midjourney in Discord

Command	Purpose
/imagine	Generates images from a text prompt
/describe	Suggests four example prompts based on an uploaded image

The web interface may provide corresponding functions through buttons or menus.

11. What Are the Main Challenges?

11.1 Incorrect or Unsupported Information

AI may produce incorrect explanations, invented references, or outdated information. Check important claims against reliable sources.

11.2 Privacy and Confidentiality

Uploading information may expose it to an external service. Use approved systems and avoid sharing unnecessary personal, student, financial, or confidential information.

11.3 Bias and Inappropriate Content

Responses may contain stereotypes or overlook relevant perspectives. Review examples and language for fairness and suitability.

11.4 Overdependence

Accepting generated answers without understanding them can weaken learning. Use AI to support practice, questioning, and reasoning.

11.5 Academic Integrity

Learners should follow institutional rules, acknowledge AI assistance where required, and take responsibility for submitted work.

11.6 Access and Cost

Tools may differ in subscription requirements, usage limits, connectivity needs, and available features. Consider these factors when planning classroom activities.

12. Practical Learning Activity

Task: Use an available AI assistant to prepare a short explanation of water conservation for Class VIII.

Follow these steps:

1. Specify the topic, class level, length, and format.
2. Request three practical examples.
3. Compare the explanation with a textbook or reliable source.
4. Identify any errors, omissions, or unsuitable language.
5. Revise the content.
6. Record what the AI contributed and what you corrected.

Expected learning outcome: Learners practise prompting, source checking, critical reading, and responsible revision.

13. Review Questions

1. What is the difference between an AI model and an AI application?
2. What details should an effective prompt contain?
3. How can AI support teaching and learning?
4. Why should generated code be tested?
5. What precautions should users take before uploading personal information?
6. Why are slash commands specific to individual tools?

14. Key Takeaways

- Choose an AI tool according to the task and available features.
- Provide clear instructions, relevant context, and an expected format.
- Verify facts, calculations, references, and generated code.
- Protect confidential information and respect others' work.
- Use AI to strengthen learning and professional judgement.