Getting Started with AI

A Simple Guide for Beginners

This guide is for anyone who's curious about Artificial Intelligence but doesn't know where to begin. You might have heard people talk about tools like ChatGPT or Copilot and wondered what the fuss is about. This isn't about robots or sci-fi. This is about helping you think better, make smarter decisions and get things done faster.

What is AI?

Think of AI as a very smart assistant you can talk to. You type something in and it replies with helpful answers, suggestions or ideas. It can write emails, summarise documents, answer questions, brainstorm ideas and more. You're in charge; it just helps you think faster and better.

How to Get Started

1. Pick an AI Tool

You don't need to know code or pay for anything to begin. Just choose one of these tools:

- 🤖 ChatGPT: https://chat.openai.com
- 🤖 Microsoft Copilot: Built into Microsoft 365 apps or visit https://copilot.microsoft.com
- 🤖 Claude: https://claude.ai
- 🤖 Google Gemini: https://gemini.google.com

Any of these work well. All you need is an email address to sign up.

2. Open It Up

Once you've created your account, you'll see a chat window. That's where you type questions (prompts) or tasks.

3. Start Simple

Try typing something like: 'Please give me five ideas for healthy lunches' or 'Explain Bitcoin to me like I'm 12'. It will reply instantly. You can then ask follow-up questions or just try something else.

How to Ask Better Questions

The way you ask questions matters. If you're vague, you'll get vague answers. If you're clear, you'll get helpful ones.

Try this structure:

- **1** - Tell it what you want
- **2** - Say how you want it
- **3** - Mention who it's for

Example: 'Write a one-paragraph summary of this article in plain English for a busy executive.'

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Don't expect perfection. AI is useful, not flawless (think consistent B-minus).
- Don't give up if the first reply isn't great. Ask again differently.
- Don't treat it like Google. You need to chat to it, and it's better for thinking than searching.

What AI Is Really Good At

AI is brilliant at helping you think. It's not about replacing you, it's assistive. It's about making space for better work, deeper insight and faster progress.

Use it to:

- Explore ideas
- Get feedback on your writing
- Break down complex topics
- Draft communications
- Reflect on your thinking

Explore More with Rob May's AI Books

Each of these books is designed to help you use AI more effectively, wherever you are on the journey. They are all available on Amazon (in 9 countries) and in all good bookshops:
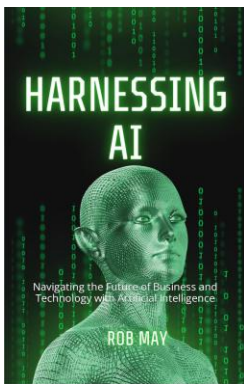
Harnessing AI is a clear, accessible guide to Artificial Intelligence, covering its core concepts, real-world applications, and ethical, legal, and societal impacts. It shows how organisations can set an AI business strategy, create policies, deliver training, and take practical steps for adoption and improvement, offering a strategic framework for using AI responsibly to drive innovation and growth. https://amzn.eu/d/0l4bxpc

The Sandwich Shop of Prompting is a clear, practical guide to mastering prompt engineering for any AI tool. Using a "sandwich shop" metaphor, it explains the science behind how prompts work and why detail matters, then builds skill through numerous models, examples, and tips, helping readers consistently craft better prompts and unlock more accurate, useful AI responses. https://amzn.eu/d/19I4wXo

Prompt Smart is a hands-on guide to mastering prompt writing, offering 100 practical lessons. It shows how to craft clear, effective prompts for accurate results, and unlock creativity for content, problem-solving, and innovation. Covering many job roles, it equips readers to use AI thoughtfully, work more effectively, and develop lasting prompting confidence. https://amzn.eu/d/aWLt0nu
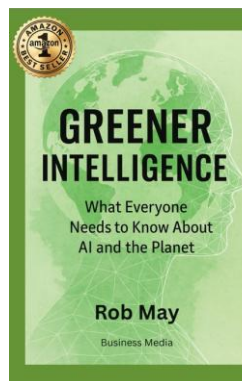
Greener Intelligence is a clear, plain-speaking guide to the environmental realities of AI, revealing the hidden costs in energy, water, minerals, and waste behind these everyday tools. Aimed at leaders, policymakers, and curious readers, it offers practical ways to use AI responsibly, showing that real intelligence is measured not by what we build, but by how sustainably we build it. https://amzn.eu/d/c9Lgbzg

You can find more information, downloads and updates at: **https://www.thoughtprovoked.co.uk**