

AI Glossary

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

What it means: An umbrella term for any computer system that learns from data to do jobs humans usually do

Why it matters: AI is baked into nearly every app you touch, so its decisions shape your online world

Example: TikTok's For You page studies what you watch, then decides your next video

Algorithm

What it means: A set of rules that tells a computer how to decide or sort things

Why it matters: Algorithms pick which posts you see first, who gets banned, and which ads chase you

Example: Instagram's algorithm pushes posts with lots of saves to the top of your feed

Machine Learning

What it means: The part of AI where a system "learns" patterns from data instead of being hand-coded for every task

Why it matters: If the data is biased, the learning is biased, no matter how fancy the math looks

Example: A face filter trained mostly on light-skinned faces glitches on dark skin tones

Training Data

What it means: The photos, texts, clicks, and other info fed into an AI while it learns

Why it matters: Garbage in, garbage out – bad or unbalanced data means bad or unfair AI

Example: A voice assistant that struggles with Caribbean English was likely trained on mostly North-American voices

Generative AI

What it means: AI that doesn't just predict, it creates new text, images, music, or videos from patterns it learned

Why it matters: Great for creativity *or* deepfakes; it blurs the line between real and fake

Example: ChatGPT writing essays or an app that turns selfies into "anime" portraits.

Bias (in AI)

What it means: When an AI's outputs unfairly favour or harm certain groups because of skewed data or design

Why it matters: Biased AI can silence queer content, misgender trans users, or misidentify Black faces

Example: Job-screening software that rejects résumés with traditionally Black names

Content Moderation

What it means: Automated or human filters that decide what can stay online and what gets removed

Why it matters: AI moderation often over polices BIPOC or LGBTQ+ posts while missing real hate speech

Example: A post celebrating Pride is flagged as "adult content" but a violent meme stays up

Facial Recognition

What it means: AI that scans and matches faces in photos or live video

Why it matters: Powers surveillance cameras and phone unlock – but misfires more on trans, non-binary, and darker-skinned faces

Example: Airport kiosks that auto-match you to your passport photo.

Surveillance

What it means: Continuous watching, tracking, or recording, often powered by AI

Why it matters: Over-polices marginalised communities and chills free expression

Example: Cameras in schools using AI to “monitor safety” but really logging every student’s movements

Shadowbanning

What it means: When a platform secretly limits how many people see your content without telling you

Why it matters: Silences activists and marginalised voices while pretending nothing’s wrong

Example: Your video view-count flatlines and friends can’t find your profile, even though it’s “public”

Deepfake

What it means: Video or audio generated by AI to look or sound like someone doing or saying things they never did

Why it matters: Can be used for satire *or* harassment and misinformation

Example: A fake video of a celebrity endorsing a scam product

Representation (in Tech)

What it means: Who gets a seat at the table when AI is designed and trained

Why it matters: Without diverse creators, AI overlooks or harms the communities it should serve

Example: An avatar game that only offers hair textures for white players shows poor representation