

AI, EXPLAINED.

The beginner's desk-side cheat sheet

01 THE BASICS

AI	Software that recognizes patterns or generates content.
MODEL / LLM	The trained system generating answers. LLM means large language model.
PROMPT	The question or instruction you give the assistant.
CONTEXT	Information available for this answer: instructions, messages, files and tool results.
TOKEN	A small piece of text or data. One word can be several tokens.
CONTEXT WINDOW	The limit on how much a model can work with at once, measured in tokens.

03 UNDER THE HOOD

PARAMETERS / WEIGHTS	Learned numbers inside a model. Weights are one kind of parameter.
TRAINING	Adjusting model parameters using examples and feedback.
INFERENCE	Running a trained model to produce an answer.
OPEN WEIGHTS	Downloadable model parameters. Check the license; this is not always open source.

02 ANSWERS TO ACTIONS

TOOL	A capability such as reading a file, searching the web or running a command.
AGENT	A model using tools to work through a task over several steps.
HARNESS	Software managing context, tools, permissions and the agent's work loop.
HALLUCINATION	A believable but incorrect or invented answer. Check important claims.
MEMORY	An app feature saving selected information for later chats. Not perfect recall.
MCP	A shared protocol for connecting AI apps to tools and data sources.

04 WHERE YOU USE IT

GUI / CLI	Graphical interface with buttons / command-line interface used in a terminal.
API	A way for programs to request model responses. Billing can be separate from chat plans.
LOCAL / CLOUD	The model runs on your computer / on a provider's servers.
OPEN SOURCE	Software whose license allows using, modifying and sharing its source code.

YOUR FIRST USEFUL PROMPT

Task + relevant context + constraints + desired output

Try it. Read the result. Correct what is wrong.