

The AI-Ready Child Roadmap

A practical, safety-first guide for parents and guardians of children ages 5-16

Explore • Build • Create • Innovate

Help your child understand, question and create with AI—without letting AI do the thinking for them.

Inside this guide

- Age-by-age skills and activities
- Six family rules for safer AI use
- A tool-selection checklist
- Conversation prompts that build critical thinking
- A realistic 30-day family action plan

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How to use this roadmap

AI readiness is not about rushing a child onto the newest chatbot. It is the ability to recognise AI, understand its limits, protect private information, check claims and use technology to create—not merely consume.

The parent's role

Stay curious, co-use tools at first, keep conversations open and increase independence only as judgement grows.

Four stages, one direction

Stage	Age	Main goal
Explore	5–7	Notice patterns and learn that computers follow examples and instructions.
Build	8–10	Test simple models, ask better questions and protect personal information.
Create	11–13	Use AI to support original work while verifying facts and documenting choices.
Innovate	14–16	Build useful projects, evaluate trade-offs and create portfolio evidence.

A good rhythm

- Explain one idea in plain language.
- Try one short activity together.
- Ask the child to explain what happened.
- Connect the lesson to something they already use.
- Stop while curiosity is still high.

Ages 5-7: Explore

Goal for this stage

Build curiosity and simple pattern thinking without giving a child independent access to general-purpose AI chatbots.

Skills to grow

- Sort objects by colour, shape or purpose.
- Follow and change step-by-step instructions.
- Tell the difference between a person, a machine and a pretend character.
- Ask an adult before using a new app or sharing anything.

Try these together

- Play “robot instructions”: give exact steps for making a sandwich or drawing a shape.
- Sort picture cards, then change the sorting rule.
- Design a helpful imaginary robot and name what it needs to sense.

Ask, don't lecture

Conversation prompt

“The computer guessed this. What clues do you think it used?”

Ready for the next stage when...

Your child can describe what the tool did, name one way it could be wrong, and follow the family's privacy rule without repeated reminders.

Ages 8-10: Build

Goal for this stage

Turn AI from magic into something testable: examples go in, a model finds patterns, and results can fail.

Skills to grow

- Recognise recommendations, voice assistants and image filters as AI.
- Give clear instructions and compare two outputs.
- Check a surprising claim with a trusted source.
- Keep names, school details, images and location private.

Try these together

- Train a simple image, sound or pose classifier with Google Teachable Machine.
- Test a model with easy and difficult examples; record mistakes.
- Create a “real, edited or AI-made?” family guessing game.

Ask, don't lecture

Conversation prompt

“What example could we try that might confuse the model?”

Ready for the next stage when...

Your child can describe what the tool did, name one way it could be wrong, and follow the family's privacy rule without repeated reminders.

Ages 11-13: Create

Goal for this stage

Use AI as a coach or brainstorming partner while preserving original thinking, attribution and school rules.

Skills to grow

- Break a project into plan, draft, test and reflection.
- Verify factual claims across reliable sources.
- Explain hallucination, bias and why confident answers can still be wrong.
- State where AI helped and what the learner changed.

Try these together

- Ask AI for three science-project ideas, then choose and redesign one.
- Compare an AI explanation with a textbook or reputable learning site.
- Build a Scratch project that reacts to a trained model.
- Keep a short “AI use log” for one school task.

Ask, don't lecture

Conversation prompt

“Which part shows your own judgement, and how can someone tell?”

Ready for the next stage when...

Your child can describe what the tool did, name one way it could be wrong, and follow the family's privacy rule without repeated reminders.

Ages 14–16: Innovate

Goal for this stage

Build useful, ethical projects and portfolio evidence while evaluating privacy, fairness and real-world impact.

Skills to grow

- Choose tools based on purpose, data handling and school policy.
- Design tests for accuracy, bias and failure cases.
- Use AI to learn a process rather than outsource the finished answer.
- Document sources, prompts, revisions and limitations.

Try these together

- Create a study tutor from approved source notes, then audit five answers.
- Build a small data or computer-vision project and publish a project reflection.
- Debate a school AI policy from student, teacher and parent viewpoints.
- Interview someone in an AI-affected career and map the human skills required.

Ask, don't lecture

Conversation prompt

“Who benefits, who might be harmed, and what safeguard would improve this?”

Ready for the next stage when...

Your child can describe what the tool did, name one way it could be wrong, and follow the family's privacy rule without repeated reminders.

Six family rules for safer AI use

Write these rules together and post them near the family's shared device. Adapt them to age, maturity, school policy and the specific tool.

- Ask first. A child checks with an adult before trying a new AI tool.
- Protect private information. Never enter full names, contact details, school, live location, passwords, health details or private family content.
- Check important claims. AI can produce plausible but false information; verify school, health, safety and money advice using authoritative sources.
- Create, don't copy. Use AI for questions, examples, feedback and alternatives—not to submit work the child did not understand or make.
- People come first. An AI chatbot is not a secret-keeper, therapist or replacement for trusted adults and friends.
- Tell an adult. Stop and share anything confusing, sexual, frightening, manipulative or unsafe.

Age note

General-purpose services set their own minimum ages and parental-consent rules. Check the current terms and protections of every product before access; supervise use and follow school policy.

AI tool selection checklist

A familiar brand name does not automatically make a tool suitable for a child. Review the actual product, account type and current settings.

Before your child uses it

☐	Purpose is educational or creative—not simply answer production.
☐	Minimum age and parental-consent rules are clear.
☐	Privacy policy explains what happens to prompts, files, audio and images.
☐	You can limit history, sharing, memory, public profiles and contact from others.
☐	The tool has reporting and blocking routes.
☐	Outputs can be checked or traced to sources.
☐	The child knows what information must never be entered.
☐	Use follows the child’s school rules and assignment instructions.

Red flag

If a tool pressures a child to keep secrets, encourages emotional dependence, requests sensitive information or produces harmful content, stop use, preserve necessary evidence and report it to the platform and an appropriate trusted authority.

Conversation prompts that build judgement

Use one prompt after a project, video, recommendation or AI conversation. The aim is reflection—not catching the child out.

- Where do you think AI was used here?
- What information went into the system?
- What might the system be missing?
- How could we check whether this answer is true?
- Whose viewpoint is represented—and whose might be absent?
- What did the AI contribute, and what did you contribute?
- Would you be comfortable if this prompt became public?
- What would a responsible person do next?
- How did using the tool change your thinking?
- Could we solve this without AI—and which approach teaches us more?

A useful family phrase

“Show me what happened. You are not in trouble for telling me.”

Your 30-day family action plan

Week 1 — Notice	Find five places AI appears in daily life. Discuss what each system predicts or recommends.
Week 2 — Test	Complete one age-appropriate activity. Deliberately test easy, unusual and unfair examples.
Week 3 — Protect	Review privacy settings, agree the six family rules and place them near the device.
Week 4 — Create	Make one original artefact: experiment log, Scratch project, poster, story critique or mini app. Add a reflection explaining what AI did and what the child did.

At the end of 30 days, ask

- What can you now explain that you could not explain before?
- Which family rule matters most, and why?
- What mistake taught you the most?
- What would you like to build next?

Keep the journey going

The strongest AI-ready children are not the ones who use the most tools. They are the ones who stay curious, protect themselves and others, check what they see, and use technology to turn ideas into responsible action.

Your next step

Choose one fifteen-minute activity from the correct age stage and put it on the family calendar this week.

Trusted starting points

- BrainyBloomClub: age-guided STEM roadmaps, projects and safety resources.
- UNICEF Parenting: guidance on approaching AI with children.
- Google Teachable Machine: a browser-based way to train simple image, sound and pose models.
- Machine Learning for Kids: guided projects that connect model training to Scratch or Python.
- StopBullying.gov and national child-safety authorities: cyberbullying prevention and response.
- The provider's official parent resources and terms: always check current age and privacy rules.

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**Questions or partnership enquiries:
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Educational information only. This guide is not medical, legal or mental-health advice. Product features, age requirements and laws change; verify current rules in your country and with the child's school. Updated August 2026.