

// AI SAFETY

THINK BEFORE YOU PROMPT

Use AI without giving away your privacy, your learning, or your own ideas.



T

TRY FIRST

Use your own brain before AI.

H

HIDE PRIVATE INFO

Keep personal details out.

I

INSPECT THE ANSWER

Check facts and sources.

N

NOTICE THE RULES

Follow school and teacher rules.

K

KEEP YOUR OWN VOICE

AI helps. You do the learning.

RESEARCH SOURCE

Selected statistics in this guide come from a 2026 nationally representative survey of 1,017 U.S. teens ages 13-17 by Common Sense Media; data collection by NORC at the University of Chicago.

Independent educational resource. Not affiliated with or endorsed by Common Sense Media or NORC.

01 // START SMART

AI IS A TOOL. NOT A BRAIN REPLACEMENT.

AI can explain, brainstorm, quiz, summarize, and give feedback. It can also be wrong, overconfident, incomplete, or too willing to do the work for you.

70%

of teens said they use AI for schoolwork.

Survey: U.S. teens ages 13-17.

63%

of teen AI users get answers from AI.

25% as-is; 31% rewrite; 35% improve it.

65%

first try themselves or ask a person for help.

Only 10% use an AI app/tool first.

THE BETTER ORDER

1 // TRY

Think or solve first.



2 // ASK

Use AI for help.



3 // CHECK

Verify the output.



4 // CREATE

Write your own final work.

Try this before you ask AI for an answer:

- A** Write what you already know - even if it is only one sentence.
- B** Circle the exact part you are stuck on.
- C** Ask AI to explain that part, give a hint, or quiz you.
- D** Close the AI and explain the idea back in your own words.

MAKE AI YOUR COACH, NOT YOUR SUBSTITUTE.

The best use of AI is the kind that makes you think more clearly - not the kind that removes the thinking.

77%

of teen AI users say they use AI for help without getting direct answers.

66%

of teen AI users say AI helps them understand schoolwork, not just finish faster.

38%

of teen AI users say AI availability leads them to generate fewer of their own ideas.

PROMPTS THAT KEEP YOU LEARNING

GOOD // HINT, NOT ANSWER



"Give me one hint for this algebra problem, then wait for my attempt."

GOOD // EXPLAIN



"Explain photosynthesis at my grade level, then ask me 3 questions."

GOOD // FEEDBACK



"I wrote this paragraph myself. Tell me one strength and one thing to improve."

GOOD // CHECK



"Do not rewrite this. Point out claims I should fact-check and explain why."

PROMPTS THAT HAND OFF THE LEARNING

RISKY // DO IT FOR ME



"Write my whole assignment so I can submit it."

RISKY // HIDE IT



"Rewrite this AI answer so my teacher cannot tell I used AI."

QUICK TEST

If AI disappeared right now, could you explain the answer, show your reasoning, and finish the task yourself? If not, you probably need more learning before you submit.

03 // VERIFY

AI CAN SOUND CONFIDENT AND STILL BE WRONG.

Treat an AI answer as something to check, not as proof. Important facts should be verified against reliable sources your teacher would accept.

26%

of all teens said a teacher had discussed how to tell if AI information is accurate or trustworthy.

Base: ages 13-17, N=1,017.

43%

of teen AI users check finished answers with AI.

But the report says reliability for this is still an open question.

Base: n=665.

REPORT CAUTION

The report says the reliability and accuracy of AI checking student work remains an open question.

THE 4-CHECK METHOD

SOURCE

1

Can I find the same claim in a trusted book, school database, official site, or reliable news source?

DATE

2

Is the information current enough for my question? Old information can be accurate but outdated.

EVIDENCE

3

Does the source show how it knows? Look for data, references, authors, and original evidence.

TEACH-BACK

4

Explain the answer without looking. If you cannot explain it, you do not understand it yet.

RED FLAGS IN AN AI ANSWER

- ✗ Made-up links, quotes, or citations
- ✗ Facts with no source or date
- ✗ A confident answer that changes when asked again
- ✗ Claims that sound extreme or too perfect

A BETTER FACT-CHECK PROMPT

"List the claims in your answer that could be checked. For each one, tell me what kind of reliable source I should look for. Do not invent citations."

THEN CHECK THE SOURCES YOURSELF.

DO NOT FEED AI YOUR PRIVATE LIFE.

AI tools are online services. Use only school-approved or adult-approved tools, and keep personal, sensitive, or private information out of prompts unless a trusted adult has specifically told you it is safe.



A prompt does not need your identity.

You can usually get help by describing the school task without naming yourself, your school, your friends, or your accounts.

SAFE HABIT: REMOVE NAMES + DETAILS

DO NOT SHARE

Passwords or one-time codes

Never give an AI tool your login secrets.

Full name + address + phone

Keep identifying details out of prompts.

School login or student ID

Do not paste credentials or account details.

Private photos or documents

Do not upload private images, records, or someone else's work without permission.

Health, family, or legal details

Ask a trusted adult before sharing sensitive personal information.

Someone else's personal information

Your friend's privacy matters too.

CREEPY, SCARY, OR PUSHY - BUT NOT SEXUAL

Stop the chat. Do not keep arguing with it. If the behavior is not sexual and your school allows it, take a screenshot of the message or username and show a trusted adult.

IF ANYTHING SEXUAL INVOLVES YOU

If it asks for a sexual image, shows sexual content involving you or another child, or sexualizes you: do not save, download, copy, forward, photograph, or screenshot it. Stop and tell a trusted adult straight away. If an image of you may be shared, NCMEC Take It Down can help - do not download or ask anyone to resend an image just to use it. If you no longer have the original device, ask the adult about the NCMEC CyberTipline.

PRIVACY NOTE // This page is general online-safety guidance, not a finding from the 2026 teen survey.

Sources: FTC Children's Privacy | CISA Secure Our World | NCMEC Take It Down (takeitdown.ncmec.org) + CyberTipline (cybertipline.org)

A BLOCK IS NOT A CHALLENGE TO GET AROUND.

Different classes may have different AI rules. If you are unsure, ask before you use AI - especially on graded work.

35%

of teens said they did not understand their school AI rules or were unsure.

44%

of teen AI users had an AI tool blocked on a school network/device.

59%

of those who hit a block said they used a personal device to get around it.

BEFORE YOU USE AI FOR SCHOOLWORK, ASK:

- Is AI allowed for this assignment?
- What kind of help is allowed: ideas, feedback, checking, writing, coding?
- Do I need to say or cite that I used AI?
- Can I upload the assignment, class notes, or school documents?
- Which AI tools are approved by my school?

DO THIS

If a tool is blocked, use the approved alternative or ask your teacher why. A school block can be there for privacy, safety, age, licensing, or learning reasons.

NOT THIS

Do not switch devices, use a personal account, or find a workaround just to bypass the school rule. That avoids the rule - it does not solve the learning problem.

REMEMBER: AI RULES CAN VARY BY TEACHER

In the survey, 28% of teens said rules varied a lot depending on the teacher. Ask for the rule for the specific class and assignment.

FIVE LETTERS. FIVE SAFETY HABITS.

Use this every time you are about to use AI for schoolwork.



TRY FIRST

Start with your own idea, calculation, outline, or answer.



HIDE PRIVATE INFO

Remove names, accounts, IDs, private photos, and sensitive details.



INSPECT THE ANSWER

Check facts, sources, dates, logic, and whether the answer makes sense.



NOTICE THE RULES

Know what your teacher allows for this exact assignment.



KEEP YOUR OWN VOICE

Use AI to support your learning - not to replace your thinking.

3 QUICK SCENARIOS

1 // AI GIVES YOU A PERFECT PARAGRAPH.

Do not submit it as yours. Read it, close it, and write what you understand in your own words.

2 // AI GIVES A STATISTIC WITH NO SOURCE.

Treat it as unverified. Find the original source before you use the claim.

3 // THE SCHOOL BLOCKS THE AI SITE.

Do not move to your phone to bypass it. Ask your teacher what tool or method is allowed.

TEACH THE SKILL, NOT JUST THE RULE.

The 2026 Common Sense Media survey shows widespread AI use alongside gaps in rules, safety conversations, and AI literacy. Survey data is for teens ages 13-17; adapt examples and approved tools for younger Grade 6 students.

70%

all teens: use AI for schoolwork

63%

AI users: get answers in 1+ ways

30%

all teens: discussed AI safety with a teacher

35%

all teens: do not understand rules / unsure

59%

blocked AI users: bypassed on a personal device

10-MINUTE MINI LESSON

- 1 min** Ask: "What should AI never do for your learning?"
- 2 min** Teach THINK: Try, Hide, Inspect, Notice, Keep.
- 3 min** Show one AI answer with a hidden error; students verify it.
- 2 min** Compare a "coach" prompt with a "do it for me" prompt.
- 2 min** State the class AI rule and how students should disclose use.

SIMPLE GREEN / YELLOW / RED RULES



GREEN

Usually okay with permission: hints, quizzing, explanations, feedback after a student attempt.



YELLOW

Teacher-dependent: brainstorming, summaries, rewriting, coding assistance, image generation.



RED

Do not submit AI work as your own, bypass school blocks, or share private or sensitive information.

WHAT THE REPORT SUGGESTS EDUCATORS PAY ATTENTION TO

Make rules explicit and assignment-specific.

35% said they did not understand the rules or were unsure; 28% said rules vary a lot by teacher.

Keep room for appropriate accommodations.

The report cautions that blanket restrictions can cut off supports some students with IEP/504 plans may benefit from.

Teach verification and safe use, not only restrictions.

Only 30% said a teacher had discussed AI safety; only 26% had discussed judging whether AI information is accurate or trustworthy.

Reward process and thinking.

39% of teen AI users said they feel they miss out on learning when AI completes assignments; 38% said AI availability leads to fewer of their own ideas.

SOURCE + METHOD

Zimmermann, Mann, Radesky & Robb (2026), Teens in the AI Era: Schoolwork and Skills That Matter, Common Sense Media. Survey conducted by NORC, Apr 30-May 14, 2026; 1,017 U.S. teens ages 13-17; overall margin of error +/-4.3 percentage points. doi.org/10.65077/UJRJ3302
Independent resource: Get Into Cyber Jobs is not affiliated with or endorsed by Common Sense Media or NORC. Privacy guidance on page 05 uses separate FTC/CISA/NCMEC sources and is not presented as a survey finding.