

Understand the Machine

A SELF-ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLAN

AI Career Readiness Checklist

Figure out how AI is likely to affect your job, which skills are worth building, and exactly what to do over the next 90 days. No panic — just a plan.

Free AI literacy for everyone — no tech background needed

understandthemachine.org

"Will AI take my job?" is the wrong question. The better one is: which of my tasks can AI do, and which still need me? This worksheet walks you through an honest self-assessment and turns it into a concrete plan you can start this week.

AI AND JOBS IN 60 SECONDS

AI is changing work, but it rarely replaces a whole job — it changes the *tasks*. Work built on empathy, hands-on skill, and judgment is hardest to automate. Learning to work *with* AI is the single best way to stay ahead.

Part 1: How AI-Proof Is Your Job?

Answer each question honestly and circle the points. Add them up at the end.

1. How much of your work repeats the same steps?

Mostly routine (0) · Some routine, some surprises (1) · Almost every day is different (2)

2. Does your job require being physically present and using your hands?

Yes, hands-on with objects/people (2) · A mix (1) · Almost all on a computer (0)

3. How important is connecting with people emotionally?

Central — trust and empathy (2) · Somewhat (1) · Mostly data and documents (0)

4. How much creative or original problem-solving does it need?

A lot of new ideas (2) · I adapt known methods (1) · Clear procedures for most tasks (0)

5. How much is processing or analyzing data and documents?

That's the core of my job (0) · Part of it (1) · Very little (2)

Your score: _____ / 10

0–3 · Higher exposure. Many of your tasks are ones AI does well. Your job will likely change a lot — but you have time. Prioritize Parts 3–5.

4–6 · Moderate exposure. A healthy mix. AI will assist parts of your work; lean into the human parts and adopt tools early.

7–10 · Lower exposure. Your work leans on skills AI struggles with. Stay open to AI tools for paperwork and scheduling to make your day easier.

Part 2: Map Your Own Tasks

List the main tasks of your job, then sort each into a column. The pattern that appears tells you where to focus.

AI is strongest at...

Routine · digital · rule-based

My tasks like this:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

AI is weakest at...

Physical · emotional · novel

My tasks like this:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What this means: the left column is where AI will change your work first — aim to do those tasks *with* AI's help. The right column is your durable advantage; look for ways to spend more of your time there.

Part 3: Build the Skills AI Can't Match

These human skills are your career insurance. Check the ones you want to grow, and note one concrete way to practice each.

- ☐ **Critical thinking & judgment** — weigh trade-offs and make the call. *Practice:* volunteer for a decision others avoid.
- ☐ **Empathy & emotional intelligence** — the human touch machines fake but can't feel. *Practice:* take on a role helping frustrated customers or teammates.
- ☐ **Creative problem-solving** — combine ideas in new ways. *Practice:* tackle a messy problem with no clear procedure.
- ☐ **Physical dexterity & adaptability** — hands-on skill in the real world. *Practice:* deepen a craft or trade you already touch.
- ☐ **Building trust & relationships** — people buy from, listen to, and learn from people they trust. *Practice:* reconnect with two contacts a month.
- ☐ **Leadership & motivation** — inspire and grow a team. *Practice:* mentor someone junior or lead a small project.

Part 4: Learn to Use AI in Your Field

The workers who do best learn to use AI, not compete with it. Work through this list:

- ☐ Try a free AI assistant (ChatGPT, Gemini, or Claude) for one real task this week.
- ☐ Identify the two most repetitive tasks in your job — could AI draft or speed up either?
- ☐ Find out which AI tools people in your specific field are already using.
- ☐ Ask if your employer offers AI training — and take it if they do.
- ☐ Practice writing clear instructions ("prompts"); specific asks get far better results.
- ☐ Always fact-check AI output before you rely on it — you stay responsible for the result.

Part 5: Your 30 / 60 / 90-Day Plan

First 30 days

Get oriented

- ☐ Complete the self-assessment and task map above.
- ☐ Try one AI tool on one real task.
- ☐ Pick one "AI-can't" skill from Part 3 to grow this quarter.

Days 31–60

Build momentum

- ☐ Use an AI tool weekly for a routine task; note what it does well and badly.
- ☐ Take one short course, tutorial, or workplace training.
- ☐ Have two conversations with people in your field about how AI is changing it.

Days 61–90

Reshape your role

- ☐ Volunteer for work that leans on your human strengths (judgment, people, creativity).
- ☐ Propose one way AI could help your team — and how you'd lead it.
- ☐ Refresh your résumé to highlight the skills AI can't replace.

Starting Points by Field

Not sure where AI fits your work? Find the row closest to yours for a first, low-risk way to try it this week:

If you work in...	Try using AI to...	Keep doing yourself
Office / admin	Draft routine emails, summarize long documents, format spreadsheets	Judgment calls, sensitive communication, final review
Sales / customer-facing	Personalize outreach, prep for calls, answer FAQs faster	Building trust and reading the person in front of you
Healthcare / care work	Draft notes, explain terms to patients, handle scheduling paperwork	Hands-on care, empathy, clinical judgment
Skilled trades	Look up specs, draft quotes and invoices, plan job steps	The physical work — AI can't crawl under the sink
Teaching	Draft lesson ideas, differentiate materials, write feedback starters	Connecting with students and adapting in the moment
Creative / marketing	Brainstorm, make rough drafts and mockups, repurpose content	Original voice, taste, and the final creative call

The rule in every row: let AI take the routine first draft, and keep the judgment, relationships, and final decisions for yourself. That's not just safer — it's exactly where your value is heading.

Myth Check

You've heard...	The honest reality
"AI will replace all jobs in 10 years."	Studies estimate AI could automate a quarter to a third of <i>tasks</i> , not jobs. Transitions take decades, and new jobs appear.
"Only blue-collar jobs are at risk."	This wave hits routine <i>white-collar</i> work harder. A plumber's job is harder to automate than an entry-level analyst's.
"You need a computer-science degree."	You need to <i>use</i> AI tools well — like driving a car without knowing the engine. Willingness to learn is enough.
"AI is coming for your job tomorrow."	Adoption is slow — software, training, workflows, and rules all take time. Start preparing now, calmly.

Remember the Pattern of History

Farm machines, factory automation, and personal computers each destroyed specific tasks — and created new work no one had imagined. The transition can be genuinely hard for individuals, which is exactly why starting early matters. Technology has always meant change, not collapse. The smart move isn't panic — it's to pay attention, keep learning, and lean into what makes you irreplaceable.

Free places to keep learning

- Your public library — free courses via LinkedIn Learning, Gale, or Coursera in many systems
- YouTube tutorials and your employer's training for tools in your field
- Community college continuing-education and workforce programs

Sources & further reading

- World Economic Forum — Future of Jobs Report, [weforum.org](https://www.weforum.org)
- O*NET — occupation and skills database, ononline.org
- Task-exposure research: OpenAI & University of Pennsylvania (2023); Goldman Sachs; McKinsey

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