

The AI Literacy Checklist: What Everyone Should Know

FREE EDUCATIONAL BRIEF · LEARN AI. UNCOVER THE DATA. PROTECT THE TRUTH.

You don't need to code to be AI-literate. You need a working mental model of what these systems are, what they're good at, where they fail, and who is accountable when they do. This brief distills AI literacy into ten checkable statements. If you can explain each one to a colleague, you are ahead of most of the market.

THE CHECKLIST

» 1. I can explain what an LLM does

It predicts likely text from patterns in training data — it does not look up verified facts.

» 2. I know models hallucinate

Fluent, confident, and wrong is a normal failure mode, not a rare glitch.

» 3. I check provenance

Before trusting an image, voice, or quote, I ask where it came from and whether it can be traced to a source.

» 4. I know what I'm sharing

Anything pasted into a public AI tool may be retained; sensitive data needs approved channels.

» 5. I can spot automation

I recognize when I'm talking to a bot and know how to escalate to a human.

» 6. I understand training data

Models inherit the gaps and biases of what they were fed; outputs reflect that inheritance.

» 7. I know AI content can be labeled

Disclosure labels and content credentials exist, and their absence is itself information.

» 8. I keep a human in the loop

For consequential decisions — money, health, law, reputation — AI drafts, humans decide.

» 9. I know my rights are in play

My voice, face, and creative work can be copied; consent and provenance records are my defense.

» 10. I keep learning

Capabilities shift quarterly; my mental model has a maintenance schedule.

USING THIS WITH A TEAM

Run the ten items as a quick survey. Anything scoring low becomes a training topic. Pair the checklist with hands-on exercises — the SMI Academy's free drills and pathways exist exactly for this — because literacy sticks when people break and fix things themselves.

INVESTIGATOR'S TAKEAWAYS

- AI literacy is a mental model, not a technical credential.
- The two core reflexes: verify provenance, keep humans on consequential decisions.
- Treat data you paste into tools as potentially public.
- Bias and gaps in training data surface in outputs — expect them.
- Revisit your understanding regularly; the field moves in months, not years.