



Practical AI Pathways.com

The Plain-English AI Starter Checklist

A practical first-step guide for adults, busy professionals, caregivers, and small business owners who want to use AI without getting overwhelmed.

Your goal for this checklist

Pick one real problem, choose one useful AI tool, write one clear prompt, check the results, and create one simple workflow you can repeat.

Clarify

Choose one problem.

Create

Use one strong prompt.

Repeat

Turn it into a workflow.

Prepared by Practical AI Pathways

PracticalAIPathways.com

How to Use This Checklist

This checklist is designed to help you take one practical first step with AI. It is not about learning every tool or chasing every trend. It is about choosing one real problem and using AI to create one useful result.

Work through the checklist in order. Do not skip the first step. Most AI frustration happens because people start with a tool before they are clear about the task.

Plain-English rule

If you cannot explain the task in one sentence, slow down. The clearer the task, the better the AI result.

Step 1 - Pick One Real Problem

Start with one task that is annoying, repetitive, confusing, or time-consuming. AI works best when it has a specific job to do.

- I know the exact task I want help with.
- The task is specific enough to explain in one sentence.
- The task is useful, not just interesting.
- The task does not require private, sensitive, or confidential information.
- The task would save me time or help me think more clearly.

My one-sentence task:

Step 2 - Choose One Tool

Do not begin with five tools. Begin with one. The right tool is the one that helps you complete the task with the least confusion.

- I can access the tool easily.
- I understand the basic purpose of the tool.
- The tool fits my comfort level.
- The tool does not require me to buy a subscription before I know it helps.
- I am not using the tool for medical, legal, tax, insurance, or financial decisions without professional verification.

Good starter uses for AI

Summarizing notes, brainstorming ideas, drafting outlines, organizing messy information, creating checklists, rewriting for clarity, preparing meeting questions, and comparing options.

Step 3 - Use a Clear Prompt Formula

A good prompt does not need to be fancy. It needs to be clear. Use this simple formula:

Prompt Formula

Role + Task + Context + Format + Tone + Limits

Example:

Act as a plain-English writing assistant. Help me organize these notes into a simple one-page checklist for a small business owner. Use short headings, clear bullet points, and a calm professional tone. Do not add facts that are not in my notes.

My starter prompt:

Step 4 - Check the Output Before You Use It

AI can be helpful, but it can also be incomplete, outdated, or confidently wrong. Treat the first answer as a draft, not as final truth.

- The answer actually addresses my task.
- The answer is clear and understandable.
- Important facts, dates, names, prices, laws, or rules are verified elsewhere.
- The answer does not include private information I should not share.
- The answer does not sound too exaggerated, risky, or salesy.
- I revised the output into my own final wording before using it.

Safety checkpoint

Never rely on AI alone for medical, legal, tax, financial, insurance, benefits, or eligibility decisions. Use AI to organize questions, then verify with qualified sources or professionals.

Step 5 - Turn the Result Into a Repeatable Workflow

The real power of AI is not one good answer. The value comes when you turn a helpful result into a repeatable process.

- I saved the prompt that worked.
- I wrote down when to use this prompt again.
- I created a simple checklist for the workflow.
- I know what information to paste into the prompt next time.
- I know what I must review or verify before using the output.

Your 30-Minute AI Starter Plan

Use this quick plan when you want to try AI without wasting the afternoon.

Time	Action
5 minutes	Choose one real problem. Write it in one sentence.
5 minutes	Pick one AI tool you already have or can access easily.
10 minutes	Write one prompt using the formula: Role + Task + Context + Format + Tone + Limits.
5 minutes	Review the answer. Mark anything that needs checking or rewriting.
5 minutes	Save the useful prompt and write down when you would use it again.

When You Are Ready for Help

The best next step is an AI Clarity Session. Complete the short questionnaire, then meet person-to-person to clarify your goals, choose practical tools, and create a simple AI action plan.

Start here: PracticalAIPathways.com

Quick reminder

You do not need to master AI all at once. You need one useful pathway, one simple workflow, and one practical result you can build on.

Notes and Disclaimer

Use this space to record the first task you want to try, the tool you used, and what happened.

Task I tried:

Tool I used:

Prompt I used:

What worked:

What I need help with next:

Disclaimer

This checklist is for informational and educational purposes only. It is not legal, financial, medical, tax, insurance, benefits, or professional advice. AI tools can make mistakes or provide outdated information. Always verify important decisions with qualified sources or professionals.

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