Artificial Intelligence
Tips for Parents

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saferinternet
210 6007686

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www
SaferInternet4Kids.gr
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What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

According to the official website of the European Parliament:
"AI is the ability of a machine to display human-like capabilities such as reasoning, learning, planning and creativity.

AI enables technical systems to perceive their environment, deal with what they perceive, solve problems and act to achieve a specific goal. The computer receives data - already prepared or gathered through its own sensors such as a camera - processes it and responds.

Some AI technologies have been around for more than 50 years, but advances in computing power, the availability of enormous quantities of data and new algorithms have led to major AI breakthroughs in recent years".

Future applications are expected to bring about enormous changes, but AI is already present in our everyday lives".

Examples of AI

Some representative examples of artificial intelligence applications are:

- personal assistants on mobile devices,
- search engines,
- automatic translations,
- personalized ads,
- fake news detection applications,
- image analysis software,
- facial and speech recognition systems,
- smart homes, cities, cars,
- the internet of things and more.

It is important to mention applications based on large language models, such as ChatGPT, which has revolutionized the field, but has also attracted mixed reviews. The principle of operation of machine learning systems like ChatGPT is based on the processing of huge volumes of data collected from the world wide web. Consequently, we should be particularly careful with the information provided to us which forces us to use our critical thinking.

What can parents do to prepare their children for a world with artificial intelligence?

As AI applications continue to proliferate and become an integral part of our daily lives, it is vital to prepare children for the future.

⇨ **Talk about the benefits and risks of using artificial intelligence**

Many AI tools can help children be creative and learn new skills. There are apps to improve their writing skills or even their digital skills. Many AI applications can also offer personalized learning programs. In addition, they have the potential to improve the accessibility of knowledge for people with special needs, with speech-to-text conversions and vice versa, thus facilitating learning and communication.

Artificial intelligence can be embedded in an image/voice recognition game for young children, a personal assistant on a mobile device, or a chatbot-type model that can provide answers and offer advice. Talk to your child about the AI technology and apps they use. Ask them about the ways they use them and what excites them. Get them thinking about how this technology could help them learn and grow.

There may also be risks when using artificial intelligence tools. For example, many chatbots are designed to respond like humans, which can make the children feel like they are having a social interaction and in some cases become emotionally dependent. Talk to your child about how using AI programs makes them feel. Help them become aware that they are interacting with programs, not people. Although the AI simulation mimics human intelligence, it lacks emotion and consciousness.

In no case should one underestimate the possibility of storing and processing personal data, which may endanger a child's privacy. Make sure your kids know the rules of safe online behavior. This includes not sharing their personal information, as well as obtaining permission before sharing others' information.

Try AI tools together

It is a good idea for children to try and use artificial intelligence programs with adult support. That way, you can make sure they're using tools that won't expose them to harmful content. Help children realize how artificial intelligence is being used around them. Ask them to think about the ways they already interact with artificial intelligence.

Talk about the potential for misleading or biased content

Artificial intelligence tools are designed by humans and are often based on processing data collected from the world wide web, which reflect the existing biases of society. Machine learning tools like ChatGPT often make mistakes, producing misleading, biased or incorrect information, but in a way that looks real and is easy to believe. Furthermore, these tools could be manipulated and used to produce and spread fake news and propaganda.

Young children may be particularly vulnerable to such content, as they may not have reached the level of critical thinking required to assess the accuracy of the information. Parents should experiment with these tools with their children, by playing and learning the techniques to spot misinformation and biased content.

➡️ Discuss plagiarism and cheating

Many popular AI tools generate text and images that children may be tempted to use in their schoolwork. It is very easy for ChatGPT to "compose" a text on a certain topic or do an assignment on a historical event, producing a seemingly well-written paper.

Explain to your children that using artificial intelligence for school work could be considered plagiarism or cheating. Direct them to educational tools that help them build on the knowledge provided to them in school. Age-appropriate AI tools can complement their learning, not replace it.

➡️ Cultivate the child's critical thinking

All school educators should promote and encourage the basic thinking skills in children, especially critical and creative thinking. Learning to apply those thinking skills to their daily lives, children will grow up to be active citizens.
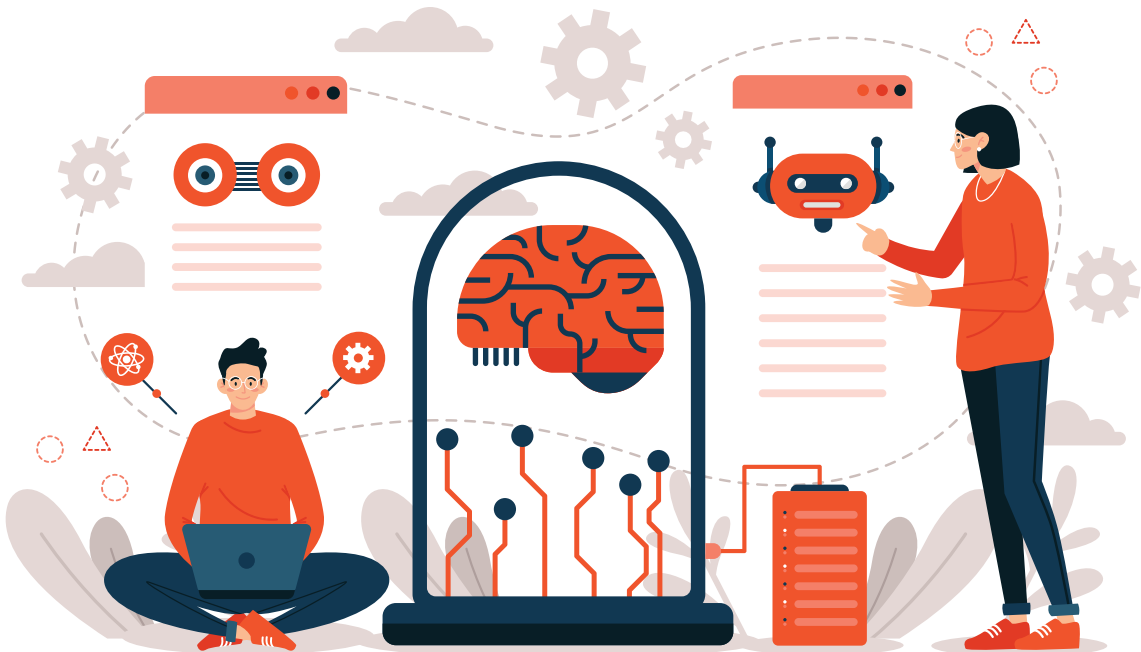
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INSTITUTE OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

INHOPE
ins@fe

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