



What Is Artificial Intelligence?

An honest hour, over coffee — Laurel Beach

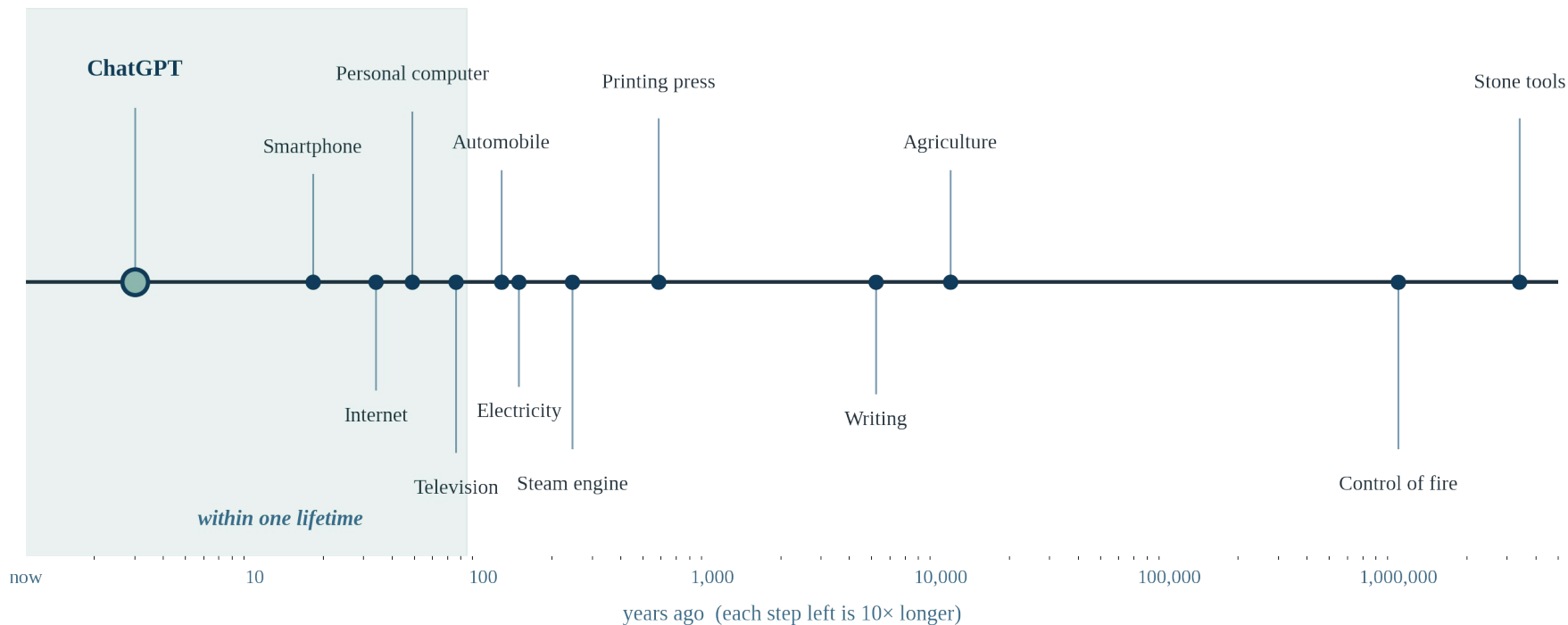
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For almost all of history, the tools you grew up with were the tools you grew old with.

This moment is the exception. Here is the evidence.

Almost nothing changed — for a very long time.



Source: Our World in Data (Roser, 2023); first stone tools per McPherron et al., Nature, 2010. Horizontal axis is logarithmic.



3.4 million years

is how long humans used stone tools.

Electricity is about 140 years old. ChatGPT is younger than your car.

How long it took to reach 100 million people



Source: UBS / Reuters, Feb 2023 (Similarweb data). "The fastest-growing consumer application in history."



800 million people

use ChatGPT every week — nearly 1 in 10 adults on Earth.

It launched in November 2022.

Source: OpenAI (Sam Altman, DevDay), October 2025.

Speed is not the real story.



Every machine before

took over our hands and our backs — the plow, the engine, the assembly line.



This one

reaches for our minds — writing, planning, analysis, judgment.

*“One of the things that sets AI apart is its ability to impact high-skilled jobs.” —
IMF, 2024*

It could automate work that fills 60–70% of the average workday.

It reaches almost everyone's work.



80%

of U.S. workers have at least
10% of their tasks exposed
to AI

OpenAI / Univ. of Pennsylvania, 2023



300M

full-time jobs exposed to
automation worldwide

Goldman Sachs, 2023



60%

of jobs in advanced
economies are affected by
AI

IMF, 2024



Even the experts disagree — and that is the honest truth.

The optimists

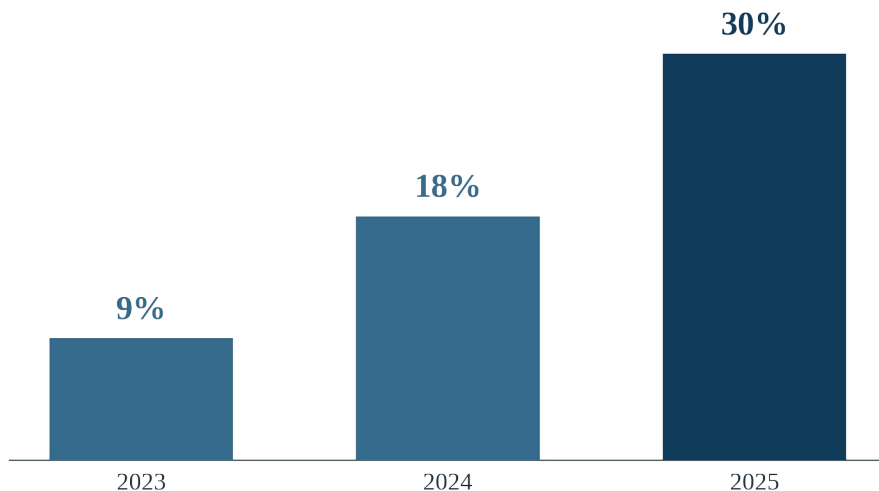
\$2.6–4.4 trillion a year (McKinsey).
+7% of global GDP over a decade (Goldman Sachs).

The skeptic

At most a 0.66% productivity gain in 10 years (Acemoglu, MIT). Real, but modest.

And the first signs are already in the data: early-career workers in the most exposed jobs are down 13–16% since 2022.

And here is why this room matters.



AI use among adults 50+

Use among adults 50+ has tripled in two years.

Yet only 25% of those over 70 use it — against 47% of those in their 50s.

Women: about 22–25% lower odds of using it than men.



A tool that finally speaks your language.

You ask in plain words, the way you would ask a person. It answers.
That is the whole of it.

Here is what it can do for you.



Catch a
scam call



Make a baffling
letter plain



Write the
hard email



See through
a fake photo



Plan the meal,
the trip



Explain anything,
simply

Five free assistants to begin with

- **ChatGPT** all-around help, voice, images chatgpt.com
- **Google Gemini** if you live in Gmail & Android gemini.google.com
- **Microsoft Copilot** if you live in Windows & Office copilot.microsoft.com
- **Claude** careful writing, reading documents claude.ai
- **Perplexity** research that shows its sources perplexity.ai

All have a real free version. Paid is about \$20 a month — most people never need it.

Use the right one for the job



Trustworthy answers — Perplexity footnotes every claim. Then click the source and check it.



Your own letters & PDFs — NotebookLM answers only from what you upload (notebooklm.google.com).



Travel & trips — ChatGPT or Gemini build day-by-day plans, packing lists, budgets.



Home & life — any assistant: meal plans, hard emails, plain-English letters, summaries.

The habit that matters most: for anything important, verify the source yourself.

How to talk to it

Talk to it like a smart, willing helper who only knows what you tell it.

WHO it should be — “a patient teacher,” “a careful editor”

WHAT you want — explain... write... compare... summarize...

WHAT IT SHOULD KNOW — your situation and any limits

HOW you want it back — “5 bullets,” “plain English,” “a short, warm note”

Keep talking. The first answer is a draft: “shorter,” “warmer,” “explain like I’m new.”

The best trick: “Before you answer, ask me any questions you need.”

Try: “I’ll paste an insurance letter — tell me in plain English what it means and what to do, and ask me anything unclear.”

Where to keep learning



AI Confidence 101 — my seven-lesson course, free

suemukherjee.com/learn



Senior Planet (AARP) — free live online classes

seniorplanet.org



AI Skills 4 Women — free, built with Microsoft

founderz.com/ai-skills-4-women



Milford Public Library — free courses with your card

203-783-3290

Start with the one that protects you.



When the voice on the phone sounds like family —

Hang up. Call back on the number you already have.

Agree on a family word. No word, no wire.

The same tool can copy a voice from a few seconds of sound. Your caution is exactly right.



You stay at the helm.

It does the rowing. You decide the course.



**This is being decided now — and
you get a say.**

Step in and try it, on your own terms. You bring the judgment; it only
does the rowing.



**Same good judgment. Same you
— now at the helm.**

Thank you — for the coffee, and the good skepticism.

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