

4. SEEK VERIFICATION

As you've learned, just because content created by generative AI looks and sounds realistic, doesn't mean that it is.

Tip: Online images, videos, and texts that make you feel intense emotions like fear, disgust, awe, anger, and anxiety are most likely to go viral. This highly emotional content is also an effective way to get clicks and spread misinformation – and AI tools can help boost that virality. Pay attention to your reactions and take these feelings as a hint that you need more time to verify if what you're seeing or reading is legitimate.

You can rely on certain global bodies such as the International Fact-Checking Network to find out which sources take extra care with verifying the information they publish. On the Signatories page (ifencodeofprinciples.poynter.org/signatories), search for your country to see which sources made the list. **Snopes.com** and **PolitiFact.com** are two solid resources for readers in the United States.

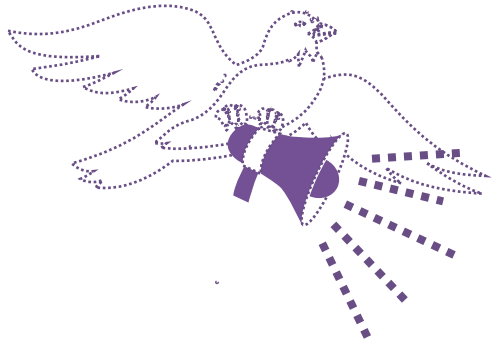
But wait, that's not it! There's so much more to say about AI. The Data Detox Kit includes many guides about AI, as well as other topics like data privacy, digital safety, virtual wellbeing, online misinformation, and more.

Find out more at DataDetoxKit.org



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WHAT'S THE BUZZ WITH AI?

'AI' has become a buzzword that's used to describe all kinds of tools and applications – from virtual assistants to deepfake generators.

There's a lot of attention on the fun or creative aspects of these 'cool' new tools... but did you know that AI is also at work behind many of the essential systems that affect our everyday lives, including employment, health care, education, law enforcement, and so much more?

AI tools are making some systems a lot faster and more efficient. But that also means that it's supercharging the speed and efficiency of other things, too – including online harms like misinformation, scams, and life-altering harassment... even influencing people how to vote.

As you follow this Data Detox, you'll get a closer look at AI and see that all this buzz can have a big sting.

Let's go!

1. DEMYSTIFY AI

Understanding AI doesn't have to feel like rocket science. Some people talk about AI as if it's magic, but 'artificial intelligence' is just a machine.

Did you know? "AI" refers to a variety of tools designed to recognise patterns, solve problems, and make decisions at a much greater speed and scale than humans can. But like any tool, AI is designed and programmed by humans. The people who create these machines give them rules to follow: "Do this; but don't do that."

When people talk about AI, they could be talking about so many things. Check out some examples of AI tools that are especially popular:

- **Text-generation tools** create content based on certain keywords (or "prompts") you define. They are trained on large amounts of text from the internet, of varying degrees of quality.
- **Image-generation tools** create pictures or videos based on certain keywords you define.
- **Recommendation systems** show you content that they 'predict' you're most likely to click on or engage with. These systems are working in the background of search engines, social media feeds, and auto-play on YouTube.



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2. FEEL THE WEIGHT OF AI

While AI tools might feel "virtual", they have a real impact on the physical environment.

Did you know? The buildings that house the servers that power AI and the internet are called 'data centers'. They get so hot, they need air conditioners blasting around the clock. The combination of servers and cooling pipes produces a lot of noise and uses a lot of land, water and energy.

Data centers are just one physical manifestation of AI. To get a full picture, you'd have to look into mining, manufacturing, production, and disposal of devices, servers, satellites, undersea internet cables, and other parts.

3. BE AWARE OF SYNTHETIC MEDIA

When people talk about AI, they're often referring to generative AI and its output, synthetic media: namely, the texts, images, videos, and audio generated by AI tools. These outputs look apparently real but are actually generated by computer programs.

Tip: Seek out examples of synthetic media in order to gain a better understanding of how realistic AI-generated images, videos, and voice clones can be. You can test yourself with a quiz like [AIGeneratedorNot.com](https://www.aigeneratedornot.com). The results might surprise you!

Going down the synthetic media rabbit-hole can quickly lead to unsafe content, so be careful what you generate and what you search for. Also, oftentimes companies behind AI tools do not clearly explain what data they're collecting from you and for what purposes, so always proceed with caution.

Try it: Input text prompts that can generate AI images using a free tool like [Perchance.org](https://perchance.org) to see it in action. There, you can type a description of what you want to see, like "cat wearing a red scarf" and then hit "generate".

Now that you've seen and heard examples of synthetic media, can you see why people so easily fall for it?

