

What's new in the AI-embedded Essential Digital Skills Framework?



At FutureDotNow, we're committed to making sure everyone in the workforce – not just the tech specialists – has the confidence and skills to thrive in an AI-enabled world.

Our refreshed, AI-embedded Essential Digital Skills Framework weaves essential AI skills into the workplace tasks under each of the Framework's existing five skill areas, so every worker can understand, evaluate and safely use AI tools – whatever their role or sector.



What's new?

1. Integration of essential AI skills across all skill areas

The new framework doesn't just add a few AI tasks; it weaves AI awareness and responsible use into every skill area. For example, where the previous framework focused on basic digital tasks (like sending emails or managing files), the new version asks workers to understand, use, and evaluate AI tools as part of everyday work.

2. Updated task descriptions

Many existing tasks have been rewritten to reference AI tools directly. For instance, "finding information online" now includes using AI assistants, and "problem solving" covers using generative AI to tackle work challenges.

3. New tasks to close AI skills gaps

The framework introduces new tasks specifically designed to address gaps in AI literacy, effective communication, critical evaluation, and responsible and ethical use of AI. This includes developing effective prompts, understanding the risks of AI (like deepfakes and AI-powered scams), following data handling policies for AI systems, and knowing when and how to use authorised AI tools at work.

4. Emphasis on safe, legal, and responsible use

There's a stronger focus on acting with caution online, especially when using AI. Workers are expected to classify and share information securely, avoid unauthorised AI services, and understand the legal and ethical implications of AI use.

Specific changes

Below is a summary of the changes made to the Work elements of the Essential Digital Skills Framework, across the five digital skills areas, to embrace the AI competencies needed by working age adults.

You can see line-by-line detail of the changes made across all tasks in our report, '[Embedding AI in the Essential Digital Skills Framework](#)'.

Handling information and content

- **Updated the task on sharing information internally and externally**, adding an additional example around avoiding sharing sensitive data with unauthorised generative AI tools

Communicating

- **Updated the task on use of workplace digital tools**, adding 'appropriately' to signal need for compliant use of generative AI tools
- **Added examples of generative AI tools** such as Gemini, Copilot and ChatGPT, alongside traditional digital communication tools

Transacting

- **Added new task on secure transacting in AI contexts**, including ability to identify AI-generated scams

Problem solving

- **Updated all tasks** to include:
 - AI as standard problem solving resources and productivity tools
 - AI learning assistants as digital learning resources
 - Add 'appropriately' to signal need for compliant use of generative AI tools
- **Added new task on prompt engineering**

Staying safe and legal online

- **Renamed the skill area** to 'Staying safe, legal and responsible online'
- **Updated most tasks with specific AI references**
- **Added new task on AI literacy**
- **Add new task on the responsible and ethical use of AI**

Explore the AI-embedded Essential Digital Skills Framework here