



Red Flags: Is Your Child Over-Reliant on AI?

Warning signs to watch for and what to do about them

How to use this checklist: Tick any behaviours you've noticed in your child. If you recognize 3 or more red flags, it's time to have a conversation and reset boundaries around AI use. The earlier you act, the easier it is to build healthier habits.



Academic & Learning Red Flags



Reaches for AI before trying independently

Your child immediately opens ChatGPT or another AI tool when faced with homework, rather than attempting the task themselves first.



Can't explain their own work

When you ask them to explain an assignment they submitted, they struggle to describe what it means or how they arrived at the answer.



Sudden improvement with no process

Their work quality has jumped dramatically, but you never see them studying, drafting, or working through problems anymore.



Writes with vocabulary or complexity beyond their level

Essays contain words, phrases, or sentence structures they don't use in normal conversation or previous schoolwork.



Anxious about AI-free assessments

They express worry or panic about exams, in-class tests, or any situation where they can't use AI tools.



Behavioural & Emotional Red Flags



Defensive when questioned about AI use

They become secretive, angry, or dismissive when you ask about whether they used AI for an assignment.



Says 'I can't do it without AI'

They've lost confidence in their ability to complete tasks independently and believe they need AI to succeed.



Increased time on devices with little output

They spend hours 'doing homework' on screens but produce minimal work, suggesting time spent refining AI prompts rather than learning.



Justifies AI use with 'everyone does it'

They defend overuse of AI by saying it's normal, their friends all do it, or teachers expect them to use it anyway.



Skill Development Red Flags



Declining independent problem-solving

They used to figure things out on their own but now wait for AI to provide answers to even simple questions.



Reduced effort or curiosity

They're less interested in understanding 'why' or 'how'—they just want the fastest route to a finished task.



Doesn't fact-check AI outputs

They submit AI-generated work without verifying accuracy, assuming everything AI says is correct.

How Many Red Flags Did You Tick?

0-2

Low Risk: Monitor use

3-5

Moderate Risk: Have a conversation

6+

High Risk: Reset boundaries now

What To Do If You Spotted Red Flags

1. Start with curiosity, not accusation

Ask open-ended questions: 'How have you been using AI for school?' Listen without judgment to understand their perspective first.

2. Review and reset expectations together

Use the Family AI Home Contract to clarify when, where, and how AI can be used. Co-create rules so they feel ownership.

3. Rebuild independent skills

Practice homework without AI for a set period. Start small: one subject or one assignment per week AI-free.

4. Check in with their school

Ask teachers if they've noticed changes in your child's work quality or ability to explain their thinking in class.

5. Monitor temporarily if needed

If trust is broken, use parental controls or monitoring apps to ensure AI use follows agreed boundaries—but always tell your child first.

Need more help? Download our Family AI Home Contract and Conversation Starters for age-appropriate guidance.

More resources at digitalsafetysquad.com/ai-in-schools

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