
AI Foundations

The basics before we open Render · AVC 248 · Week 1

“Just enough to use it well.”

This is not an AI class. We will cover only what you need to use AI thoughtfully.

START HERE

What is an LLM?

A large language model is trained on huge amounts of text to predict the next words. So at heart it is a very strong pattern and prediction engine.

It often sounds confident, even when it is wrong.

✗ Not a person

✗ Not a search engine

✗ Not always right



A prediction engine, not a mind.

Powerful, but it does not know things the way you do.

Great at / Not reliable for



GREAT AT

- Drafting
- Summarizing
- Brainstorming
- Reorganizing
- Explaining
- Tailoring your own material



NOT RELIABLE FOR

- Facts and citations without checking
- Current events
- Some math
- Anything needing your personal data
- Anything needing your judgment

THE BIG CAUTION

It can make things up



Models can hallucinate.

They can state wrong things confidently, made-up facts, fake names, invented numbers, all in a convincing tone.

You are the editor.



Always verify facts, names, and numbers.








Never trust blindly.



Always check before you use it.

THE RECIPE

How to write a good prompt

- 1** Give it a role and context 
- 2** Be specific about the task 
- 3** Give it examples or your real material 
- 4** Say the format you want 
- 5** Iterate and refine 

SEE THE DIFFERENCE

Weak vs strong prompt

WEAK

“Tell me about this company.”

No role, no context, no material, no format.
You get something generic that is not really yours.

STRONG

“You are helping me prepare for an interview. Here is the company’s About page and the job posting [paste]. Summarize what this company does and who their clients seem to be, list three things they probably care about in a junior designer, and give me five smart questions I could ask in the interview.”

The strong prompt gives role, context, your material, and a format. **And you still verify the facts and use your own judgment.**

GROUND RULES

Use it ethically and responsibly



A partner, not a ghostwriter.



Do your own thinking.



Never input personal, sensitive, or other people's private data.



Check for bias and errors.



Disclose or credit per the assignment.



Use it intentionally, given the environmental cost.



**Now you are
ready for Render.**

“Your career launchpad is next.”