



CAMBRIDGE

Digital Literacy

Introductory guide for teachers
and educational managers



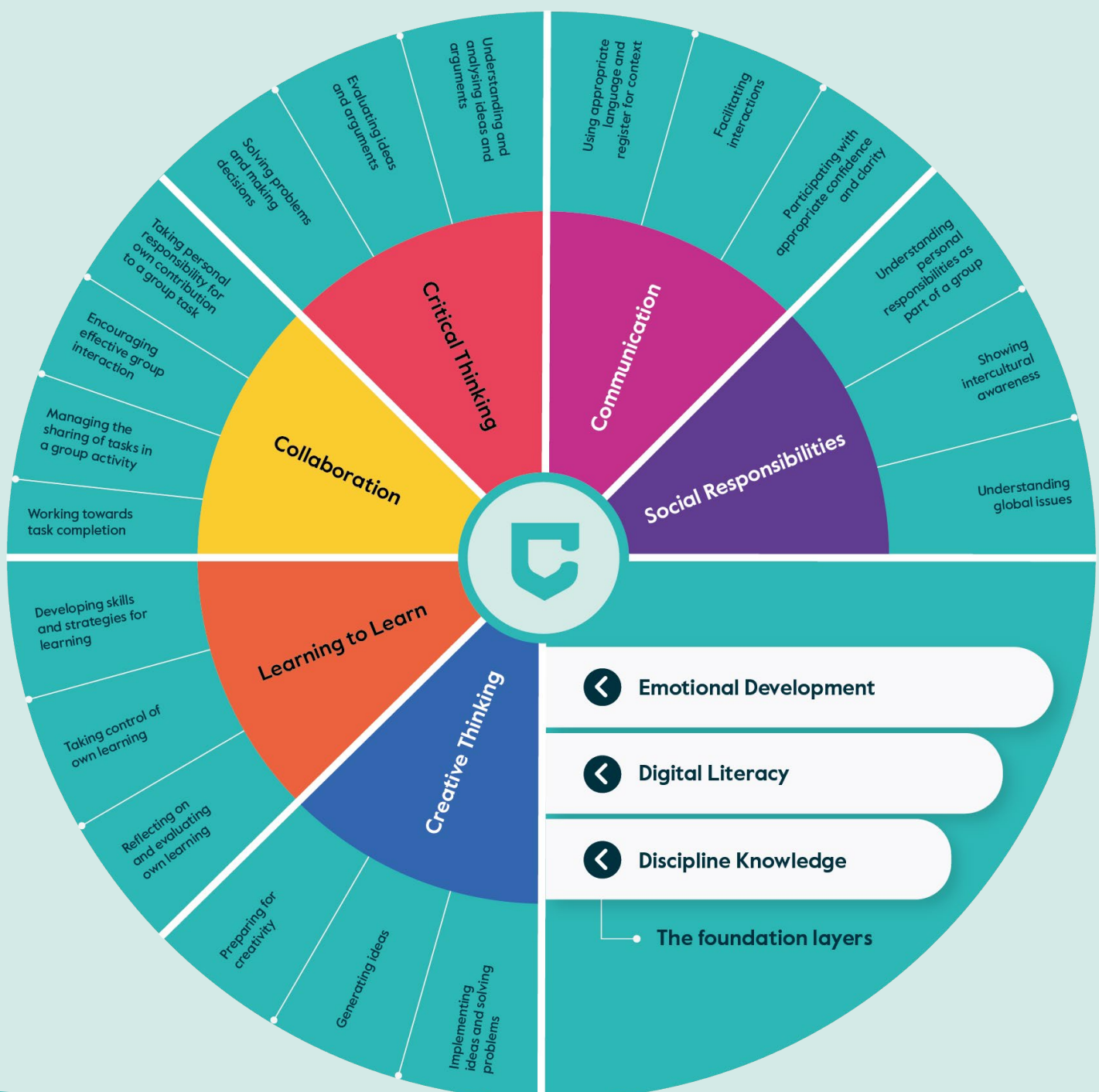
Cambridge
Life Competencies

Why teach Life Competencies?

Our world is changing fast, and we need to prepare our students with skills and experiences that go beyond simply learning an additional language.

We see the increasing need to work together with people from around the world, to think creatively and solve problems, to analyse sources more critically, to communicate our views effectively, and to maintain a positive mindset in an increasingly complex world.

We understand that the engaging and collaborative nature of the language classroom is the perfect place to develop and embed these key qualities and the Life Competencies framework supports teachers in this challenging area.



What is the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework?

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework has been created in response to educators who have asked for a way to understand how life skills, or 21st century skills, can be integrated into English language programmes. It is made up of six **Competencies** that describe how these essential skills develop and vary across different stages of education, as learners grow and change.

Creative Thinking	Learners actively participate in creative activities, generate new ideas and use them to solve problems.
Learning to Learn	Learners develop practical skills to support and take control of their learning and reflect on their own progress.
Collaboration	Learners work well together in groups through actively taking part in group activities, listening to others, sharing tasks and finding solutions to problems.
Critical Thinking	Learners identify patterns and relationships, evaluate ideas and use these skills to solve problems.
Communication	Learners choose the most appropriate language to use in different situations, manage conversations effectively and express themselves clearly and confidently.
Social Responsibilities	Learners recognise and describe different roles and responsibilities in a variety of groups and understand cultural and global issues.

In addition, there are three **Foundation layers**. Foundation layers are not separate competencies. Instead, they act as underlying dimensions that support and strengthen every other competency. They provide the essential capacities that allow learners to develop and apply all other life competencies effectively.

Emotional Development	Learners identify and understand emotions, manage their own emotions as well as develop empathy and relationship skills.
Digital Literacy	Learners create content, share and interact with others online and maintain their safety and wellbeing while using technology.
Discipline Knowledge	Learners' knowledge of the English language, as well as of other subjects, supports and strengthens their competency development.

The learning journey

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework supports learners at all stages of their learning journey, from very young pre-primary learners right through to adults in education and at work. The framework maps out how learner behaviours typically found within each competency can change and develop as learners encounter new situations and circumstances in their lives both within and beyond the classroom.

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework allows us to support learners throughout their education and into the careers of the future.

Pre-Primary

Primary

Secondary

Higher Education

At Work

How the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework aligns with key themes in ELT

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework consists of competencies that are strongly related to key themes in ELT such as:



AI Literacy



Global
Citizenship



Mediation and
Translanguaging



Oracy



Sustainability



Wellbeing

By developing the competencies in the framework, learners are also developing much of the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to develop in the above areas.

This booklet will outline how the Digital Literacy foundation layer aligns with these themes. To find out more about any of the themes, see our series of mini booklets.



Understanding the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

The Cambridge Life Competencies Framework is made up of six **Competencies** – **Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Learning to Learn, Communication, Collaboration** and **Social Responsibilities**. Each broad competency is broken down into **Core areas** that describe these competencies in more detail. These are then analysed further into **Components** that, along with example **Can Do statements**, describe the observable behaviours that learners are likely to be able to demonstrate by the end of each stage of learning if they have had the opportunity to develop in these areas.



Linked to the competencies are the three foundation layers of the framework – **Emotional Development, Digital Literacy** and **Discipline Knowledge**. Development of skills in these foundation layers underpins all other competencies.

Along with this structured breakdown, we provide **example language** that learners may use to express the actions and behaviours found in each of the Core Areas at each stage of learning. These have been informed by both our Functional Language Phrase Bank, a collection of spoken data from expert speakers of English from children to adults, and input from experienced ELT practitioners from around the world. See this example for one Core Area within Learning to Learn at the Primary stage:

Competency	Core areas	Components	Example Can Do statements	Example language
Digital Literacy	Sharing and interacting online	Connecting and interacting with others using appropriate technology	Selects and uses a range of appropriate digital communication tools and platforms to communicate with teachers and peers.	Shall we use [name of communication tool]?
		Collaborating with others digitally to complete a task	Discusses the advantages and disadvantages of digital tools chosen for a collaborative task.	One advantage of using these kinds of tools is ...
		Interacting appropriately in a digital space	Uses clear, concise and respectful language when sharing ideas and responding to others online (e.g. when interacting via a Learning Management System (LMS) forum).	Good point. I'd also say ...

By clearly defining these areas of development in a structured and detailed way, we can ensure that our teaching and learning materials take a systematic approach to delivering and developing these skills in our learners, as they progress. This means that teachers can be assured that our resources bring out the best in their students, without creating extra work.

It should be noted that the framework was developed primarily from research and frameworks that centred neurotypical expressions of Competencies, as neurodiversity and neurodivergence were less well understood when the framework was first created. Users of the framework should therefore adapt the framework flexibly, recognising that learners may demonstrate Competencies in diverse ways beyond those described in the framework. Further guidance on this will be published in due course.

What is Communication?

Digital Literacy is a foundation layer of the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework. As a foundation layer, it helps strengthen all the other life competencies by helping learners use digital tools to learn, communicate, and create effectively. It draws on technical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills that support participation, creativity, and critical thinking in digital spaces.

Being digitally literate is more than using technology, and these skills do not develop automatically through simple exposure to devices (NFER, 2010). Rather, digital literacy involves the ability to understand, question, and act thoughtfully in digital environments - recognising misinformation, checking reliability, protecting privacy, and navigating online spaces safely, ethically, and with confidence (UNESCO, 2023). It also includes being able to recognise when text, images, or videos have been AI-generated, and to identify bias or inaccuracy (sometimes called “hallucinations”) in AI outputs (OECD, 2025; UNESCO, 2024).

Educators therefore play a crucial role in embedding Digital Literacy across all areas of learning, helping learners use digital tools responsibly, creatively and with critical awareness.

We have identified three **Core areas** within Digital Literacy:

Digital Literacy	Using tools and creating digital content
	Sharing and interacting online
	Safety and wellbeing online

- **Using tools and creating digital content** refers to a learner’s ability to use technology and software with confidence to search for and create content, solve problems and innovate.
- **Sharing and interacting online** relates to the ability to communicate and connect, learn, collaborate with peers, discover and share new information and generate innovative ideas with others.
- **Safety and wellbeing online** refers to a learner’s ability to recognise risk, stay safe online and protect their physical and emotional wellbeing. This skill also involves being able to practise good online behaviours by being socially responsible and empathetic when interacting with peers.

Within these Core Areas we break things down further, defining the components that make up each Core Area:

Digital Literacy	Using tools and creating digital content	Understanding fundamentals of technology, including AI
		Developing techniques for searching and managing digital data, information and content
		Making critical judgements about digital data, information and content
		Selecting and using appropriate digital tools for specific purposes
		Creating digital content to solve a problem or complete a task
	Sharing and interacting online	Connecting and interacting with others using appropriate technology
		Collaborating with others digitally to complete a task
		Interacting appropriately in a digital space
	Safety and wellbeing online	Staying safe online and when using AI
		Maintaining personal, societal, and environmental wellbeing
		Safeguarding digital systems and devices

How does Digital Literacy align with key themes in ELT?

Digital Literacy skills support the development of the following key themes in ELT:



AI literacy: Developing AI literacy strengthens core digital literacy skills, from understanding technology and managing information to creating content, evaluating outputs, using tools safely, and making ethical, responsible choices.



Global citizenship: Effective use of digital technology, including AI, can help in addressing global issues and in community building.



Mediation and translanguaging: Interacting and collaborating with others online greatly benefits from strong mediation and translanguaging skills.



Oracy: Oracy skills transfer directly to online environments, supporting effective communication in video calls, virtual collaboration, digital presentations, and appropriate interaction across various digital platforms and contexts.



Sustainability: AI literacy helps learners find reliable sustainability information online and engage with others in online communities dedicated to addressing sustainability issues.



Wellbeing: Interacting with digital devices and AI in appropriate ways can be helpful for wellbeing, whereas inappropriate use can be detrimental to wellbeing.

See our series of mini booklets on these themes to find out more.

Spotlight on AI literacy

AI literacy help learners understand, evaluate, and use AI tools in ways that support their learning. They enable learners to stay curious, motivated, and adaptable in the face of new technologies and challenges. As such, they are essential for becoming confident, resilient, and self-directed learners in a digital world.

In the context of **Digital Literacy**, AI literacy means being able to interact effectively and responsibly with AI. This includes setting purposeful goals for AI use, experimenting with tools to solve problems, and reflecting critically on outputs to refine results. These skills help learners take control of their own learning, while also preparing them to contribute positively to society as AI becomes more embedded in daily life.

AI literacy skills align particularly well with the **Digital Literacy** components of: **understanding fundamentals of technology, including ai; developing techniques for searching and managing digital data, information, and content; making critical judgements about digital data, information, and content; selecting and using appropriate digital tools for specific purposes; creating digital content to solve a problem or complete a task; staying safe online and when using ai; and maintaining personal, societal, and environmental wellbeing.**

We have highlighted **Example Can Do statements** from these areas of the framework that can be used to support AI literacy. Look out for the following icon in the following pages :

To find out more about how the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework supports AI literacy, see our mini booklet

For additional practical classroom ideas on using generative AI, download the free [Cambridge Teacher Activity Pack: AI in the Classroom](#), which includes ready-made lesson plans and strategies for integrating AI tools effectively.

Digital Literacy across the learning journey

Core areas may be realised in different ways across the different stages of learning. In order to demonstrate this, each **Core area** and **Component** is contextualised by an example **Can Do statement**. This illustrates what kinds of behaviour students who are competent in this area might display by the end of each stage of learning. These example Can Do statements can be used as a starting point in the development of a curriculum, programme or assessment system and will vary in their suitability for learners in different contexts. The example language is provided for teachers to consider what kind of language they could encourage their students to use in these kinds of tasks.

Pre-primary

Core areas	Components	Example Can Do statements	Example language
Using tools and creating digital content	Understanding fundamentals of technology, including AI 	Knows that some technology can understand when we talk to it.	It listens.
	Developing techniques for searching and managing digital data, information and content 	Identifies logos of familiar websites and apps.	That's [name of tool].
	Making critical judgements about digital data, information and content 	Says if AI-generated images are good for their activity.	This picture is good/bad.
	Selecting and using appropriate digital tools for specific purposes 	Can interact with age-appropriate AI tools using basic voice commands.	Please play [song/game].
	Creating digital content to solve a problem or complete a task 	Creates simple content with AI assistance (e.g. drawing) and iterates on it, with adult help.	Try again
Sharing and interacting online	Connecting and interacting with others using appropriate technology	Uses basic functions of online video chat to communicate with teachers, peers and family members, with support from an adult.	Hi! I can see you! Can you see/hear?
	Collaborating with others digitally to complete a task	Uses apps on touchscreen or other devices to complete a digital activity with a partner, e.g. a shared drawing task.	I can do red. Can you do blue?
	Interacting appropriately in a digital space	a limited range of informal digital communication means (e.g. emojis), with support from an adult.	It's a [sad/happy] face!
Safety and wellbeing online	Staying safe online and when using AI 	Only uses AI-enabled apps or websites that an adult has checked.	I can use [name of app/website]
	Maintaining personal, societal, and environmental wellbeing 	Recognises the difference between talking to a person and an AI assistant.	[AI assistant name] is not a person.
	Safeguarding digital systems and devices	Uses digital devices with respect (e.g. handles devices with care to avoid them being damaged), with support from an adult.	(Be) careful!

Primary

Core areas	Components	Example Can Do statements	Example language
Using tools and creating digital content	Understanding fundamentals of technology, including AI 	Explains what artificial intelligence means in simple words.	AI helps computers learn to do things like people do them.
	Developing techniques for searching and managing digital data, information and content 	Uses AI-enabled apps and websites to ask basic questions, with adult supervision.	What is [patineta] in English?
	Making critical judgements about digital data, information and content 	Identifies signs that an image or video has been AI-generated.	The eyes look strange.
	Selecting and using appropriate digital tools for specific purposes 	Identifies ways in which AI should not be used for learning.	You shouldn't use AI [for tests].
	Creating digital content to solve a problem or complete a task 	Can write step-by-step instructions for specific tasks, e.g. to be used in a prompt.	First, Next, Then, Finally
Sharing and interacting online	Connecting and interacting with others using appropriate technology	Sources and shares relevant online content with peers and teachers, with support from an adult.	I found (out) ...
	Collaborating with others digitally to complete a task	Collaborates on shared documents in real time to contribute to a group task (e.g. using collaborative whiteboards), with support from an adult.	(It's) your turn.
	Interacting appropriately in a digital space	Uses polite language to respond to others respectfully online, with some support.	I agree with you.
Safety and wellbeing online	Staying safe online and when using AI 	Identifies which information should not be shared when using AI.	I shouldn't write my [name/address/school].
	Maintaining personal, societal, and environmental wellbeing 	Says when they used AI to create content.	I made this with AI.
	Safeguarding digital systems and devices	Protects personal data with strong and memorable passwords, with support from an adult.	I type my password here.

Secondary

Core areas	Components	Example Can Do statements	Example language
Using tools and creating digital content	Understanding fundamentals of technology, including AI 	Compares different types of AI.	Both [chatbots and recommendation systems] use AI, but they work in different ways.
	Developing techniques for searching and managing digital data, information and content 	Checks AI answers by looking at other sources.	The chatbot said ... but this [grammar website] says ...
	Making critical judgements about digital data, information and content 	Identifies hallucinations in AI-generated outputs.	That's a hallucination because ...
	Selecting and using appropriate digital tools for specific purposes 	Uses chatbots to practise English.	Please help me practise English. You are a [role] ...
	Creating digital content to solve a problem or complete a task 	Writes and refines prompts for specific tasks to improve AI-generated output.	Instead of ... , please ...
Sharing and interacting online	Connecting and interacting with others using appropriate technology	Selects and uses a range of appropriate digital communication tools and platforms to communicate with teachers and peers.	Shall we use [name of communication tool]?
	Collaborating with others digitally to complete a task	Discusses the advantages and disadvantages of digital tools chosen for a collaborative task.	One advantage of using these (kinds of) tools is ...
	Interacting appropriately in a digital space	Uses clear, concise and respectful language when sharing ideas and responding to others online (e.g. when interacting via a Learning Management System (LMS) forum).	Good point. I'd also say ...
Safety and wellbeing online	Staying safe online and when using AI 	Explains why it is important to be careful when sharing personal data when using AI.	It's important not to share personal information when ... because ...
	Maintaining personal, societal, and environmental wellbeing 	Discusses the potential positive and negative impacts AI can have on society.	It is possible that AI ... , although ...
	Safeguarding digital systems and devices	Identifies appropriate techniques for backing up data.	I always save my photos to the cloud.

Higher education

Core areas	Components	Example Can Do statements	Example language
Using tools and creating digital content	Understanding fundamentals of technology, including AI 	Demonstrates understanding of key AI concepts.	Neural networks ...
	Developing techniques for searching and managing digital data, information and content 	Justifies why they have (not) chosen to use AI for language learning tasks.	Having considered the different options, I chose to use AI for ... because ...
	Making critical judgements about digital data, information and content 	Identifies bias in AI-generated outputs.	This essay only takes into account [Western points of view].
	Selecting and using appropriate digital tools for specific purposes 	Discusses ways in which AI tools can help or hinder learning.	[Name of tool] supports [skill] but unless it is used carefully, it could ...
	Creating digital content to solve a problem or complete a task 	Uses subject knowledge to create AI prompts and evaluate outputs.	Based on [theory/ technique], please help me think through the following problem ...
Sharing and interacting online	Connecting and interacting with others using appropriate technology	Critically evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of connecting with others through different digital means for a range of purposes and contexts.	[Email] is great for ... but it's sometimes better [to have a meeting] if ...
	Collaborating with others digitally to complete a task	Chooses the most appropriate means of digital collaboration with peers in a range of contexts.	How about we set up a quick call?
	Interacting appropriately in a digital space	Adapts communication styles and strategies appropriately for different audiences (e.g. by taking into account generational and cultural differences) in a range of digital contexts.	Is it appropriate to use first names when I write to ... , do you think?
Safety and wellbeing online	Staying safe online and when using AI 	Evaluates the privacy policies of AI apps and websites before using them.	The policy states that ...
	Maintaining personal, societal, and environmental wellbeing 	Critically evaluates AI's environmental impact.	If we compare using AI for [task] with [other method], [AI] uses [more/less] water. However, ...
	Safeguarding digital systems and devices	Alerts relevant authorities when personal data has been stolen or when an account has been hacked.	I noticed [I couldn't log in anymore].

At work

Core areas	Components	Example Can Do statements	Example language
Using tools and creating digital content	Understanding fundamentals of technology, including AI 	Explains how AI works in technology they use for work.	Our customer service chatbot uses natural language processing to deal with customer queries.
	Developing techniques for searching and managing digital data, information and content 	Evaluates the benefits and drawbacks of using AI technology to search for information.	On the one hand it can save a huge amount of time, but on the other hand ...
	Making critical judgements about digital data, information and content 	Uses own knowledge to judge AI-generated output.	This text is in line with the latest research on ... but is missing ...
	Selecting and using appropriate digital tools for specific purposes 	Identifies new ways in which AI could be used to enhance existing practices.	I wonder if we could use AI to automate [process].
	Creating digital content to solve a problem or complete a task 	Uses AI to gain a deeper understanding of a problem.	Please create an empathy map of [customer description with a particular problem].
Sharing and interacting online	Connecting and interacting with others using appropriate technology	Shares relevant online and digital content with colleagues using appropriate channels (e.g. by uploading content to a digital workspace, or by inserting hyperlinks in shared documents).	This [article] has relevance to what we're working on as part of our current project.
	Collaborating with others digitally to complete a task	Uses work management tools or project planning software to collaborate with colleagues.	I've added that action to the project board.
	Interacting appropriately in a digital space	Communicates with colleagues, customers and suppliers in a range of online and digital platforms using clear, concise and respectful language appropriate to the context.	Many thanks for your contribution to this project.
Safety and wellbeing online	Staying safe online and when using AI 	Evaluates whether it is safe to share business-sensitive information when using AI.	While it is acceptable to share [type of information] using our internal AI-powered system, it is important not to share it when using [name of external app/website].
	Maintaining personal, societal, and environmental wellbeing 	Discusses the potential impact of AI trends on their industry.	A recent trend has been ... This is like to affect ... , suggesting we should ...
	Safeguarding digital systems and devices	Implements security measures to ensure the safety of devices, e.g. by using strong passwords and regularly updating them in order to safeguard an organisation's digital content and devices.	I put a reminder in my calendar to regularly update my passwords.

Digital Literacy in the classroom

It is imperative that Digital Literacy becomes a key part of the curriculum so that learners can critically engage with digital technologies, understand how digital tools convey information and meaning, and reflect on their implications for learning, work, and citizenship. Digital Literacy skills and language learning together form a powerful combination for preparing learners to thrive in an interconnected, AI-enabled world.

Suggestions for classroom practice

The ideas presented here are intended as a general indication of the types of activity that might develop Digital Literacy skills within the learning environment, and are not a definitive list.

Strategies for teaching Digital Literacy

Using the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework Digital Literacy booklet

Familiarisation with the Core Areas, Components and Can Do Statements is helpful. Teachers should keep a copy of these to hand to refer to during lesson planning. This way, as they look at their materials, they can identify which activities and features provide learners with opportunities to develop the Digital Literacy skills described in the Digital Literacy layer of the framework.

Monitoring

In addition to monitoring learners' linguistic progress, teachers should ensure that they also monitor the progress learners make with Digital Literacy skills development. This will give teachers a better understanding of their learners' needs and how to develop their skills further. It is important for learners to be provided with opportunities to demonstrate their development of these skills over time. As in any learning process, the rate of development will differ from learner to learner, but given the appropriate guidance it will continue to climb.

Integrating the use of digital tools

For learners to begin, and benefit from, their journey of developing Digital Literacy skills, the teacher needs to successfully integrate technology into their lessons. This is often best done in a gradual manner. Even with only one computer in the room, teachers can still try out interactive websites, use online videos and new software, and manage telecommunication systems.

Here is an example of how teachers can gradually integrate technology into the language lesson when teaching the topic of travel (the following can be adjusted for any level/age group):

Action	Tool	Device(s)	Activities
Replacing regular maps and pictures with online versions	Google Maps and Google Earth or VR apps	Smart screen, laptop or VR headset	Become a digital tourist and explore London. Begin with warm-up questions, e/g. where have you travelled recently? Have you ever been to london? etc.
Using online versions of maps and pictures and using the additional functionality they offer over paper versions	Google Maps and Google Earth or VR apps	Smart screen, laptop or VR headset	Investigate the location by using the 3D layers. Look for information about London and directions on how to get to the British Museum.
Using online resources to redesign traditional listening and writing tasks	Google Earth, Google Street View, museum podcasts or Youtube audio tours, blogging platform of your choice	Smart screen, laptop, VR headset and/or projector	Take a guided tour of a museum. Conduct a listening task in class. As a take-away, students can write about their experience on their blog and share it with their peers and teacher.

Integrating technology into classroom routines

Teachers working in face-to-face classrooms can save time and support learners' Digital Literacy development by using digital tools to check attendance at the start of the lesson. Teachers can save a profile photo of each learner so that when learners come into the classroom they can find their photo in the file and drag and drop it into a 'present' section. As well as creating an opportunity for learners to use digital devices, this also makes the process of checking attendance more entertaining, and encourages learners to become more autonomous.

Activity cards

For more ideas on integrating the development of Digital Literacy skills into your classroom, see our Cambridge Life Competencies **activity card** packs. We've created a pack of cards for each stage of learning, and each individual card tackles a component from one of the core Cambridge Life Competencies. The activities are designed for you to use together with your coursebook or teaching materials, to tweak or supplement tasks. Go to cambridge.org/clcf to download your free pack.

CAMBRIDGE

Activity cards

Young learners

Cambridge Life Competencies

Using tools and creating digital content

Technology, including AI

they are going to be AI detectives, looking for AI in of clues to look for, such as:

re learning about and use the checklist to decide likely that it does).

actually uses AI and how. You can do some research to

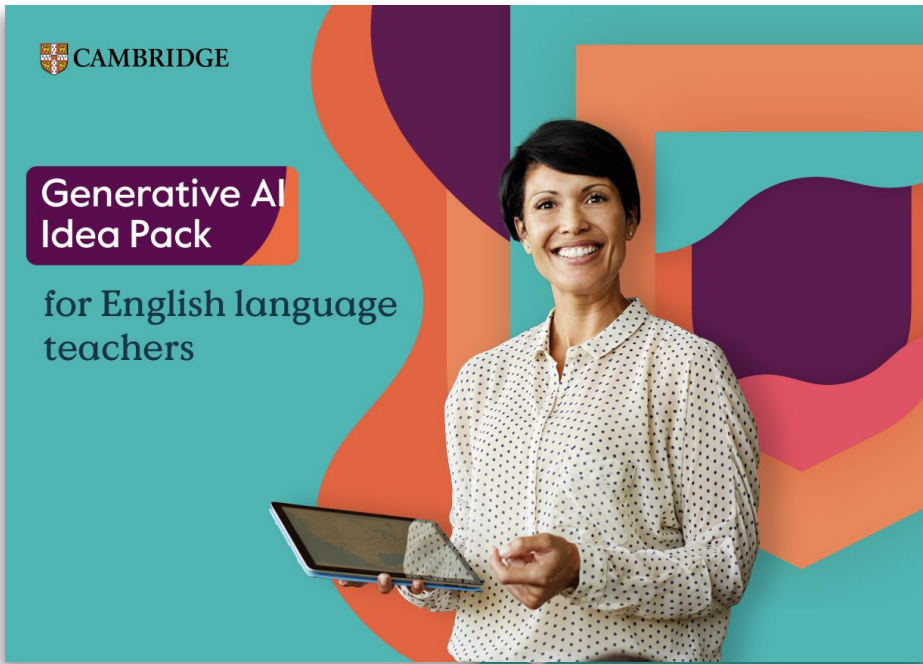
Challenge learners to find any ways that your video calling software or learning management system uses AI using the same checklist.

Young

Activity cards

For more ideas on how to integrate generative AI into your English language classroom, see our Cambridge Generative AI Idea Pack. This pack provides practical classroom activities that highlight safe, purposeful, and critical uses of AI tools. Some activities are designed specifically to support teachers in lesson planning and materials creation, while others can be used directly with learners to develop their critical engagement with AI outputs. Each activity helps teachers and learners explore AI creatively while strengthening essential skills in communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. The activities can be used alongside your coursebook or lesson materials, either to adapt and extend existing tasks or as stand-alone practice. Go to:

www.cambridge.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/GenAI_Idea_Pack.pdf to download your free pack.



Digital tools for language learning and teaching

Chatbot role play

Ask learners to role play a scenario in English related to the topic or language you are practising. For example, if you're learning about daily routines, you could ask learners to role play a conversation with a GenAI tool in the role of a person with an interesting job or lifestyle. This gives learners a chance to practise their language skills without fear of making mistakes, so it is a great confidence booster.

Example:

- Try some conversations out yourself first and save some to show as models if needed.
- Encourage learners to both ask and answer questions.
- Get learners to save their conversation and share any interesting things they spoke about with the class.
- Ask learners to experiment with asking the chatbot to correct any mistakes they make.

If you have young learners, you can facilitate this conversation with the whole class, by giving the initial prompt and then moderating the learners' suggestions to continue the conversation or having learners take turns to provide the next interaction. If you're working with teenagers or adult learners, remind them that they shouldn't enter any personal information about themselves into the chatbot.

Prompt: 'You are a [receptionist]. Have a conversation with [a customer who just arrived at your hotel.]'

Suitable for teachers of: Young Learners | Teenagers | Adults

Primary

At this level, learners are curious explorers who enjoy experimenting with new tools and ideas, often through play. They may have experience with technology outside the classroom but do not yet have the skills to use it critically or safely without guidance. Digital Literacy for this age group is about building early awareness of safe and respectful online behaviour, while giving learners opportunities to create and share simple content in English. Activities should be highly scaffolded, visual, and engaging, with teachers modelling both language and digital practices. Rather than teaching technical skills in isolation, the focus should be on developing confidence, curiosity, and healthy habits that will prepare learners for more complex digital challenges later on.

Digital storytelling

Young learners can begin exploring digital literacy through simple digital storytelling activities. Teachers can introduce child-friendly apps that allow learners to combine images with short captions or voice recordings in English. For example, learners could create a digital picture book about “My Pet” or “My Family,” using photos or drawings and writing one short sentence per page. This develops early digital content creation skills while reinforcing basic English vocabulary and structures. Teachers should model how to save and name files clearly, and then encourage learners to share their stories with the class. This process helps children understand the purpose of digital tools as a means of communication, while also practising safe and respectful sharing behaviours.

Safe commenting

Teachers can create a simple class blog where learners post their work and leave short comments on each other’s posts. Before learners begin, the teacher should introduce netiquette rules through role-play, showing examples of both positive and inappropriate comments. Learners can then practise leaving one supportive English sentence on a peer’s work, such as “I like your story because...” or “Your picture is nice.” This activity not only develops literacy skills in English but also introduces learners to safe online interaction, building early awareness of digital citizenship in a supported environment.

Spot the fake picture

With the growing presence of AI-generated content, even primary learners can begin developing simple critical awareness. Teachers can show two images — one real photo and one AI-generated (for example, a “purple elephant flying in the sky”). Learners are asked to guess which is real and which is made by AI, then discuss the reasons why. This can be kept light and playful, but it lays the groundwork for children to begin questioning digital content and recognising that not everything they see online is true. Teachers can extend the discussion by linking the task to vocabulary practice and creative storytelling in English.

Activity card idea

Try out this activity from our Young Learners activity card pack (page 74). Learners read or listen to a short text in English and then ask themselves: Is it true? Who might have written this? Why did they write it? They can also compare the information with another source to see if the message is the same. This helps learners practise questioning what they read or hear online, while developing both critical thinking and English language skills. Download this and other activity cards at cambridge.org/clcf.

Digital Literacy

  Making critical judgements about digital data, information and content

Using tools and creating digital content

Is it true?

When learners encounter information in digital contexts within course materials (e.g. in the form of a website, blog post, or podcast), write the text from the box below on the board:

Is it true?

- Read/listen closely. Do you think this is believable? Why (not)?
- Who do you think wrote this? Why did they write it?
- Look at other websites on the same topic. Do they give the same information?

Allow time for learners to discuss the questions and research other reliable sources to help them decide if the information is likely to be true or not.

Teaching online?

Try asking learners to share their ideas and findings in a collaborative document such as **Google Docs**.

Young

Over to you ...

1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
 - Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to practice and develop their digital literacy skills.
2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities that you may be using in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could adapt these activities to have a greater focus on digital literacy skills.
 - This could involve adding an element of online collaboration, encouraging learners to evaluate digital content more critically, or integrating a simple AI-related task.

Secondary

Teenagers are often confident users of digital tools, especially social media, but their skills can be uneven and their awareness of risks limited. They need structured opportunities to develop critical thinking about digital content, online identities, and AI-generated materials, alongside practising appropriate ways of interacting in digital spaces. At this level, Digital Literacy activities should encourage learners to reflect on how technology shapes their lives, while also helping them use digital tools to collaborate, research, and produce work in English. Generative AI adds new challenges, such as recognising hallucinations or bias in outputs, but also new opportunities for creativity and self-expression. The teacher's role is to guide learners in moving from being consumers of digital content to becoming critical, responsible, and collaborative creators.

Submitting blogging assignments

As well as helping learners to develop digital content, having learners submit assignments as blog posts provides excellent opportunities for them to practise connecting with others online, and interacting appropriately in a digital space. Teachers can select a free blogging platform and introduce it to their learners.

After discussing and agreeing on some netiquette guidelines for posting and commenting, learners can support each other in finding out how to navigate the platform's features. Learners can then post their written assignments as blog posts, and teachers can encourage digital interaction and online collaboration by having other learners give peer feedback in the comments.

Connecting with others globally

Teachers can foster learner engagement by using telecommunication tools to enable learners to connect with their peers from across the globe. Teachers can add virtual participants to the classroom, provide opportunities to interact with other classrooms, host guest lectures, or even take synchronous virtual field trips. Before learners are introduced to other people and cultures, it is important to discuss netiquette and guide learners on how to work with others in a digital context. This means that as well as understanding the technology and digital tools they will be using, learners should also understand how to interact appropriately in a digital space (e.g. by turn-taking, being polite, etc).

Mystery Zoom is a great activity for developing learners' Digital Literacy skills, and can be adjusted to learners' age and level. In a Mystery Zoom activity, learners pair up with another class from a different country. Learners ask yes/no questions to try to guess where in the world the mystery class is. Learners can also be encouraged to ask open-ended questions to get to know the other class.

Creating activities about online safety

Teachers should allow time during lessons to present scenarios, assignments, and/or activities to test and develop learners' knowledge and understanding of online safety. Learners should be given opportunities to recognise dangerous online behaviours, consider and discuss the possible consequences of such behaviours, and understand how to report unsafe incidents they might witness or experience.

Spotting AI bias

As teenagers are increasingly exposed to generative AI tools, it is important that they learn how to evaluate the accuracy and fairness of AI-generated texts. In this activity, the teacher prepares two short texts on the same topic: one written by a human author (for example, a textbook passage or news article) and one produced by an AI tool such as ChatGPT. Learners read both texts and compare them, looking for differences in tone, clarity, and completeness. Teachers can provide guiding questions such as: Is the information accurate? Is anything missing? Does the text show any bias or stereotypes?

After working in groups to identify issues, learners rewrite parts of the AI text in English to make it more accurate and balanced. This gives them practice in critical thinking, editing skills, and collaborative writing. By reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of AI outputs, learners begin to understand both the potential and the limitations of these tools, while also building their confidence as responsible and critical users of digital content.

Activity card idea

Take a look at this activity from our Teenage Learners activity card pack (page 74). Learners use the word **SEARCH** to guide them in thinking critically about online information. Write these on the board and go through examples together. Then, when learners research a topic online, they can use the SEARCH questions to check if the information is reliable and useful. This helps learners practise evaluating digital content while building their English vocabulary for critical thinking. Download this and other activity cards at cambridge.org/clcf.

Digital Literacy

  Making critical judgements about digital data, information and content

Search

Before learners carry out online searches for information relating to a task or project, write the word 'search' on the board and explain that each letter stands for something learners should consider when researching a topic. Elicit ideas for what each letter might stand for (see below), prompting learners or giving clues where necessary. Once you have all the words on the board, discuss with learners how the words relate to searching for information, and write the questions below next to each word.

Source: What's the source of this information? Is the source reliable?
Evidence: What evidence is there to support this information?
Author: Who is the author? Why have they written this?
Recency: Is the source recent? How do I know?
Clarity: Is this information clear? Does it make sense?
Helpfulness: Is this information helpful? Does it relate to my topic?

Teaching online?

Try setting up an online form with the five SEARCH questions and invite learners to type in their answers as they carry out their research.

Teen

Over to you ...

1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
 - Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to practice and develop their digital literacy skills.
2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities that you may be using in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could adapt these activities to have a greater focus on digital literacy skills.
 - This could involve adding an element of online collaboration, encouraging learners to evaluate digital content more critically, or integrating a simple AI-related task.

Adult

Adult learners often use technology in their daily lives and may already rely on it for work or study, but they may not always have the tools to evaluate digital content critically or to manage their professional digital identity in English. For this group, Digital Literacy is about refining and applying skills in authentic, real-world contexts, from fact-checking AI-generated reports to collaborating on professional projects online. Adults need to be able to recognise and mitigate risks around data privacy, online wellbeing, and the ethical use of generative AI, while also leveraging digital tools to enhance communication, productivity, and lifelong learning. Activities at this stage should emphasise transferable skills for work, study, and citizenship, ensuring that learners can engage confidently and responsibly with evolving technologies in English.

Professional identity online

Adult learners can benefit from activities that focus on building a professional digital identity in English. Teachers can guide learners through creating or updating their LinkedIn profiles, highlighting the importance of tone, clarity, and accuracy in English. Learners can practise writing headlines, profile summaries, and job descriptions, with the teacher modelling strong examples. To deepen critical awareness, learners can compare authentic LinkedIn profiles with AI-generated ones, discussing what feels authentic, what might be biased or exaggerated, and how to present themselves responsibly online. This activity builds both digital and language skills while supporting learners' real-world goals.

Collaborative project management

In workplace or academic contexts, adults often need to collaborate online. Teachers can simulate this by setting up a small project task (e.g., planning an event or campaign) that requires learners to use a digital collaboration tool such as Google Docs, Trello, or Microsoft Teams. Learners should be assigned roles (e.g., writer, editor, organiser) and asked to communicate updates in English within the platform. Teachers can monitor both the effectiveness of the collaboration and the language used, encouraging learners to give constructive, professional feedback. This helps learners practise authentic English interaction while gaining confidence with digital tools used in professional life.

Bias check

Adults need the ability to critically evaluate AI outputs in both study and work. Teachers can present learners with a short AI-generated article or summary (e.g., a ChatGPT response) and ask them to evaluate it for accuracy, omissions, and tone. In groups, learners identify where the text may show bias, provide misleading information, or lack detail. They then rewrite sections collaboratively in English to improve clarity and accuracy. This activity develops higher-level critical thinking and language editing skills while fostering awareness of the limitations and risks of relying uncritically on generative AI.

Activity card idea

Why not try out this activity from our Adult Learners activity card pack (page 79). Learners explore the idea of code switching, specifically how people change their language, behaviour, or style of communication depending on who they are interacting with online. Ask learners if they have ever changed the way they write a message, post on social media, or speak in a chat depending on the audience, and discuss why. They can then share examples in English and reflect on how code switching can help build positive relationships, avoid misunderstandings, and communicate more effectively in digital spaces. Download this and other activity cards at cambridge.org/clcf.

Digital Literacy

Sharing and interacting online

 **Interacting appropriately in a digital space**

Code switching

Introduce the concept of code switching online (changing your language, behaviour or appearance based on who you're interacting with). Ask learners whether they ever code switch online and invite them to give examples of when and why they might do this.

Invite learners to share their ideas about why code switching is beneficial, and explain that it can help us communicate more effectively, build positive relationships, and collaborate with different types of people.

When learners encounter digital communication texts in course materials (e.g. in the form of emails, chat room conversations or social media messages), ask them to think of examples of how people might code switch in this context.

Teaching online?

You could invite learners to use a digital mind mapping tool, such as **Miro**, to organise their ideas about how people code switch to suit different online contexts.

Adult

Over to you ...

1. Choose one of the example activities in this section and try it out with your class.
 - Following the activity, reflect on what worked well and what could be improved next time, particularly focusing on the extent to which learners were able to practice and develop their digital literacy skills.
2. Using your course book or other materials, choose a few activities that you may be using in your classes in the next week or so. Consider how you could adapt these activities to have a greater focus on digital literacy skills.
 - This could involve adding an element of online collaboration, encouraging learners to evaluate digital content more critically, or integrating a simple AI-related task.

Further reading

For more information on this topic, please see:

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Pangrazio, L., Godhe, A.-L., & Ledesma, A. G. L. (2020). What is digital literacy? A comparative review of publications across three language contexts. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, 17(6), 442–459. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2042753020946291>

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Tour, E. (2020). Teaching digital literacies in EAL/ESL classrooms: Practical strategies. *TESOL Journal*, 11(1), 1–12.

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You can find information about the other competencies and the foundation layers of the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework at cambridge.org/clcf

- ✓ Creative Thinking
- ✓ Critical Thinking
- ✓ Learning to Learn
- ✓ Collaboration
- ✓ Communication
- ✓ Social Responsibilities
- ✓ Emotional Development
- ✓ Digital Literacy

Find out more at
cambridge.org/english

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