

Chapter 1: Actual Intelligence - The Human Side of AI

Welcome to the first chapter of “Actual Intelligence,” where we’ll establish the fundamental principle that will guide our entire journey: AI is merely a tool, and the real intelligence—the “Actual Intelligence”—comes from you, the human using it.

In a world increasingly filled with headlines about artificial intelligence, it’s easy to feel intimidated or even threatened by these seemingly magical technologies. But the truth is both simpler and more empowering: these tools are powerful extensions of human capabilities, not replacements for human intelligence.

In this chapter, we’ll explore the relationship between human intelligence and AI tools like ChatGPT, helping you understand both in non-technical terms. We’ll clarify what these tools can and cannot do, dispel common misconceptions, and establish a framework for thinking about the human-AI partnership that puts you firmly in control.

Most importantly, we’ll introduce practical activities that help you take the driver’s seat in your AI interactions from day one. These hands-on exercises will demonstrate how your direction, judgment, and creativity remain essential when working with AI tools.

By the end of this chapter, you’ll have a clear understanding of what we mean by “Actual Intelligence” and why your role as the human director of AI tools is so crucial to getting valuable results. You’ll also have experienced firsthand how the quality of your direction directly impacts the usefulness of AI outputs.

Let’s begin our journey toward becoming confident, effective directors of these powerful tools, rather than passive consumers of whatever they produce.

Activities: Taking Control of Your First AI Interactions

Now that we’ve established the foundation of Actual Intelligence—the powerful partnership between your human judgment and AI capabilities—let’s put these concepts into practice with hands-on activities. These exercises are designed to help you develop your skills as an AI director while experiencing firsthand the importance of your role in guiding these tools.

Activity 1: The Director’s Chair

Objective: Experience how the specificity of your direction affects AI output.

What You’ll Need: - Access to ChatGPT (free account) - 10-15 minutes

Instructions:

1. Open ChatGPT and start a new conversation.
2. First, give a vague prompt and observe the response: *“Give me some advice.”*
3. Now, try a slightly more specific prompt: *“Give me some advice about learning new skills.”*
4. Finally, provide a highly specific prompt with context, constraints, and your goal: *“I’m a busy parent with two young children trying to learn basic Spanish in preparation for a family trip to Mexico in three months. I can only practice for about 15 minutes each day, usually while commuting on public transportation. Give me a realistic learning plan that fits these constraints and focuses on practical travel phrases.”*
5. Compare the three responses. Notice how the quality and usefulness of the AI’s output directly corresponds to the specificity of your direction.

Reflection Questions: - Which response was most useful to you, and why? - What specific elements of your detailed prompt led to improvements in the AI’s response? - How might you apply this principle of specificity to your own goals when using AI?

Activity 2: Intelligence Amplifier

Objective: Use AI as a thinking partner to amplify your own intelligence on a personal challenge.

What You’ll Need: - Access to ChatGPT - A real problem or challenge you’re currently facing - 15-20 minutes

Instructions:

1. Identify a current challenge in your life that requires some thinking or planning. This could be a decision you need to make, a project you’re planning, or a problem you’re trying to solve. Choose something real but not extremely personal or sensitive.
2. Before consulting AI, spend 3-5 minutes writing down your own thoughts about the challenge:
 - What makes this challenging?
 - What approaches have you considered?
 - What constraints or considerations are important?
3. Now, craft a prompt that asks the AI to help you think through this challenge. Include:
 - A brief description of the situation
 - Your current thoughts and approaches
 - What specific type of help you want (brainstorming, organizing your thoughts, considering perspectives you might have missed, etc.)

4. Review the AI's response and identify at least one insight or idea you hadn't fully considered.
5. Follow up with at least one clarifying question or request based on the AI's response.

Reflection Questions: - How did the AI's response compare to your initial thinking? - Did the AI help you see the problem from new angles? - How did your specific knowledge of the situation help you evaluate the AI's suggestions? - What role did you play versus what role did the AI play in this thinking partnership?

Activity 3: Myth vs. Reality

Objective: Test the limitations of AI to better understand where human intelligence remains essential.

What You'll Need: - Access to ChatGPT - Access to reliable information sources (websites, books, experts) - 20-30 minutes

Instructions:

1. Choose a topic you know well—perhaps related to your profession, a hobby, or your local community.
2. Ask ChatGPT a series of increasingly specific questions about this topic, starting with general questions and moving toward highly specific ones that might require very recent or specialized knowledge.
3. Note which questions the AI answers accurately and which ones it struggles with or provides incorrect information for.
4. For at least one question where the AI provided incorrect or incomplete information, verify the correct information through reliable sources.
5. Ask the AI to explain its limitations regarding this topic. A prompt like this works well: "What limitations might you have in providing information about [your topic]? What aspects of this subject would be difficult for you to address accurately?"

Reflection Questions: - At what point did the AI's knowledge or accuracy begin to break down? - What types of questions seemed most challenging for the AI? - How transparent was the AI about its limitations? - How would you approach using AI for this topic in the future, knowing these limitations?

Activity 4: Creative Control

Objective: Practice maintaining ownership of a creative project while using AI as an assistant.

What You'll Need: - Access to ChatGPT - 20-30 minutes

Instructions:

1. Choose a simple creative project from the options below (or create your own):
 - Write a short story (300-500 words)
 - Plan a themed dinner party
 - Design a flyer for a community event
 - Create a workout routine
2. Begin by defining your vision for the project. Write down:
 - The main goal or purpose
 - Key elements you want to include
 - Your personal style or preferences
 - Any constraints or requirements
3. Create a series of specific requests for ChatGPT that will help you with different aspects of your project. Instead of asking it to complete the entire project, break it down into components where AI assistance would be helpful. For example, if writing a short story:
 - “Suggest three possible opening paragraphs for a story about...”
 - “Help me develop the main character who is...”
 - “Provide some descriptive language for the setting of...”
4. For each AI response, select elements you like, modify others, and discard those that don't fit your vision.
5. Assemble the final project yourself, integrating AI-assisted elements with your own contributions.

Reflection Questions: - How did breaking the project into specific requests help you maintain creative control? - Which parts of the process benefited most from AI assistance? - Which aspects required your human judgment and creativity? - How does the final result reflect your vision and style, despite using AI assistance?

Activity 5: Setting Your AI Compass

Objective: Develop personal guidelines for how you want to use AI in your life.

What You'll Need: - Access to ChatGPT - Paper and pen, or digital document - 15-20 minutes

Instructions:

1. Reflect on your values, goals, and the areas of your life where you think AI tools might be helpful. Consider:
 - What types of tasks do you find draining or time-consuming?

- What skills would you like to develop, with AI as a learning aid?
 - What aspects of your thinking or work would you never want to outsource?
2. Ask ChatGPT for assistance in thinking through these questions with a prompt like: *“I’m developing personal guidelines for how I want to use AI tools like you in my life. Can you help me think through some questions to consider about where AI might be most helpful to me and where I might want to be cautious about using it? Consider aspects like learning, creativity, critical thinking, and practical tasks.”*
 3. Based on the AI’s suggestions and your own reflection, draft 3-5 personal guidelines for your AI use. These might include:
 - Types of tasks you’ll use AI for
 - Boundaries you’ll maintain
 - How you’ll verify or evaluate AI-generated content
 - When you’ll rely on purely human approaches
 4. Share your draft guidelines with ChatGPT and ask for feedback: *“Here are my draft guidelines for using AI. Can you suggest any considerations I might have overlooked or ways to make these guidelines more practical?”*
 5. Finalize your guidelines based on this feedback, keeping what resonates and discarding what doesn’t fit your values and needs.

Reflection Questions: - What did you learn about your own priorities through this exercise? - Were there any suggestions from the AI that surprised you or made you reconsider your approach? - How might these guidelines evolve as you gain more experience with AI tools? - How do these guidelines reflect your understanding of Actual Intelligence as a human-AI partnership?

Conclusion

These activities provide a starting point for developing your skills as an AI director—someone who effectively combines human judgment with AI capabilities. As you practice, you’ll become more adept at providing clear direction, evaluating AI responses critically, and maintaining ownership of your goals and processes.

Remember that the concept of Actual Intelligence emphasizes that you—the human—are the essential intelligence in this partnership. The AI is a tool that amplifies your thinking, but the direction, purpose, and wisdom come from you.

In the chapters ahead, we’ll build on these foundations by exploring more specific applications and advanced techniques for using AI tools effectively in various aspects of your life.

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- The Power of Human Direction
- Setting Realistic Expectations
- Activities: Taking Control of Your First AI Interactions