

Kids and AI: From usage to education and risks

Article

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While many adults are still leery about AI, for young people it's simply part of their everyday lives. The tech is instinctive to the younger generations, but they need education and guidance. Plus, kids might be more tuned in to AI's risks than their older counterparts, and nicer when using it. Here's what you need to know about the generation growing up powered by AI.

1. AI is instinctive to [Gen Alpha](#) and [Gen Z](#). Many kids have been using AI in one form or another for a while—12.2% of US kids aged zero to 11, and over a quarter (25.4%) of those 12 to 17 use smart speakers, per EMARKETER forecasts. Nearly 80% of UK teens aged 13 to 17 and 40% of children aged 7 to 12 use generative AI and services, per Ofcom.

“I think in the same way that we instinctively picked up social media and smartphones, and immediately incorporated them into our daily lives with very little hurdle, kids see [AI] as just another tool,” analyst Paola Flores-Marquez said on a recent edition of our “[Behind the Numbers](#)” podcast. “I think many older adults, myself included, struggle to figure out how to incorporate AI into our current technological framework, but AI is the framework for [kids].”

2. Education is essential. Even though Gen Alpha is AI-native, they still need guidance navigating how to use it safely, noted Karen Mimms-Nice in a recent article in [The Atlantic](#).

The second-largest US public school district, the Los Angeles Unified School District, has introduced a mandatory Digital Citizenship in the Age of AI course for students 13 and up. The district is also testing an AI learning platform “[Ed](#),” featuring a [chatbot](#) represented by a smiling sun. Parents and students can use Ed to ask questions about courses, grades, and attendance, as well as play games that support learning.

“For Gen Alpha, growing up with AI is going to be the norm,” said Flores-Marquez. “The fact that it's just already so intuitive and incorporated into their world is fascinating to me.”

3. AI perils exist, but kids may be more vigilant. Social media was quickly used as a bullying tool, and AI has unfortunately followed suit. In March, five students [were expelled](#) from Beverly Vista Middle School in Beverly Hills, California, after fake nude photos of their classmates were made with generative AI.

“It’s going to be another digital worry we have to learn how to navigate,” said Flores-Marquez.

On the plus side, young people may be more tuned in than many adults when it comes to identifying AI scams.

“I don’t know about you, but I constantly have to help my parents figure out what’s a scam and what’s not, [using] things I’ve just learned having been on the internet for so long,” she says.

“Obviously, things are getting more sophisticated, but I think there's a basic level of security knowledge that comes with growing up with this technology that will transfer over into adulthood.”

4. Kids may be more kind with AI, as well as more savvy. In The Atlantic article, University of Michigan assistant professor [Ying Xu](#) noted that human-like AI could further blur the lines for kids, to the point where some might start talking to other humans the way they talk to Alexa, "rudely and bossily."

Flores-Marquez has heard the opposite: "[Some] kids who grow up with smart speakers think that they're people with feelings, and so they're nice to them," she said.

Listen to the full episode of ["Behind the Numbers"](#) for more insights on Gen Z's media habits and growing up with AI.

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